



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY — 24 OCT 2022



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/23 Why did China former leader leave event?
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/hu-jintao-xi-jinping-china-government-and-politics-a50d970f740c467c20b732cee05d9481">https://apnews.com/article/hu-jintao-xi-jinping-china-government-and-politics-a50d970f740c467c20b732cee05d9481</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING (AP) — The twice-a-decade congress of China’s ruling Communist Party is a tightly choreographed event. So when former Chinese President Hu Jintao was guided off stage without explanation Saturday — as the world’s media looked on — questions spilled forth.</p> <p>The speculation ran from a health crisis to an attempted protest by the 79-year-old former leader, or a political purge by current President Xi Jinping. Xi has previously gone after retired officials on <a href="#">corruption charges</a>, though never one as high-ranking as Hu.</p> <p>China’s tightly controlled state media didn’t report the incident, but the official Xinhua News Agency <a href="#">tweeted in English</a> several hours later — as speculation raged overseas — that Hu was in poor health and needed to rest.</p> <p>Major party events can be trying: Former top leader Hu Yaobang died of a heart attack during a meeting at the age of 73, setting off the student-led pro-democracy movement that led to Tiananmen Square protests in 1989.</p> <p>Hu, who has reportedly been in poor health, appeared confused during the incident, although not in obvious distress. While an attendant held his arm, he shuffled off stage right, speaking briefly with Xi and patting Premier Li Keqiang on the shoulder. Throughout the process, most of the other delegates stared silently ahead.</p> <p>The Xinhua tweet, while believable, didn’t satisfy skeptics, and the truth may never be definitively known.</p> <p>The idea that it may have been more than a health issue stemmed from Hu’s somewhat ambiguous relationship with Xi, who succeeded him as party leader in 2012. Xi is the hard-driving son of a Communist elder, while the mild-mannered Hu hails from a family of tea merchants and trained as an engineer.</p> <p>Hu had favored his protege, Li, as his successor. Li, who belonged to Hu’s Communist Youth League faction, instead got the No. 2 spot in the party hierarchy.</p> <p>On Saturday, in a sign of a further consolidation of Xi’s power, the party congress removed Li from the leadership, dropping him from the party’s 205-member Central Committee. Li and two others who had also been appointed under Hu and were dropped from the committee are expected to go into retirement.</p> <p>Hu left the meeting at the hulking Great Hall of the People not long after the election of the new Central Committee, and more than two hours after the session had started.</p> <p>The spectacle was, in the words of longtime China watcher Bill Bishop, “humiliating.”</p> <p>The “image of Hu Jintao being led out is a perfect symbol of Xi’s absolute decimation of the ‘Communist Youth League’ faction,” Bishop wrote in his newsletter.</p> <p>Another member of the same faction, Hu Chunhua, was denied a spot on the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee in a leadership shuffle at the end of the congress, despite being an early favorite. Hu Chunhua didn’t even make it onto the 24-member Politburo one rung below.</p>

	<p>Xi has been steering China into what the party calls a “new era,” away from the legacy of former leader Deng Xiaoping, who launched China on its economic rise with market-oriented reforms — and also selected Hu as a future leader.</p> <p>It was Deng who put Hu on the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee — from which China’s leaders come — at the relatively tender age of 49.</p> <p>Xi has broken with tradition by declining to consult with senior party officials such as Hu, or defer to their factional concerns, analysts say.</p> <p>Hu attended the congress as a specially invited delegate, as is customary for senior retired officials. He was seated onstage next to Xi, in the front row with party leaders.</p> <p>Whether he was able to take part in discussions isn’t known — it’s part of the secrecy that surrounds party events. Since stepping down from the presidency in 2013, he has rarely been seen in public, drawing additional attention to his sudden departure at the congress.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Mississippi River, tributaries at record lows</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/22/weather/mississippi-river-low-level-drought-climate/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/22/weather/mississippi-river-low-level-drought-climate/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>Photos and satellite imagery from the central United States show how the region’s worst drought in at least a decade has pushed the <a href="#">Mississippi River</a> and its tributaries to drop to <a href="#">record lows this month</a>.</p> <p>Across the river basin, dozens of gauges have fallen below their low-water threshold. The Mississippi River was at historically low levels from Illinois to Louisiana this week, and many of these gauges will continue to see decreasing water levels as the forecast remains stubbornly dry.</p> <p>Drone video of the Mississippi River near Memphis shows how far the mighty river has contracted away from its banks.</p> <p>The river dropped to minus-10.75 feet there earlier this week, according to data from the National Weather Service, which was the lowest level ever recorded in Memphis.</p> <p>Drought expanded again this week across the Midwest and South, according to the US Drought Monitor. Half of the contiguous US is covered by moderate or worse drought conditions – the third-highest value of the year so far and the highest since March.</p> <p>More than 134 million people are affected by drought conditions, the monitor reports, which is the highest percent population since 2016.</p> <p>The Midwest has seen the worst deterioration, with the amount of area covered in drought increasing by an area of about 60,000 square miles, which is equivalent to the size of Georgia.</p> <p>“Topsoil moisture continues to dry out across portions of the Ohio Valley and the Corn Belt,” the Drought Tracker reported on Thursday, adding that “deeper soil moisture remains very low also across much of the Mississippi Valley.”</p> <p>The dry conditions have taken a severe toll not only on the Mississippi but the rivers that flow into it. Before-and-after satellite imagery from the National Weather Service shows how rivers have receded from their banks between July 14 and October 17.</p> <p>In Nebraska, aerial photos show the Platte River, which flows across the state and empties into the Mississippi, has almost completely dried up in some locations. The river has vanished near Kearney, Nebraska, and dry sand is all that’s left where water usually flows.</p>

Several inches of rain are possible over the next week in the central US, according to the National Weather Service, which could provide some relief, particularly for the Mississippi River's tributaries.

But the longterm outlook is drier than average. The seasonal drought outlook from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calls for the region's drought to [persist through January](#).

The river's low levels have allowed people to [walk on foot to Tower Rock](#), CNN has previously reported – an island in the middle of the Mississippi River south of St. Louis that is typically only accessible by boat. The low levels are also allowing salt water from the Gulf of Mexico to creep up the Mississippi, and the Army Corps is now building a [1,500-foot-wide underwater levee](#) to keep salt out of drinking water in Louisiana.

Additionally – just as the record-low water levels in Lake Mead have revealed [several sets of human remains](#) – a woman walking the banks of the Mississippi River over the weekend [discovered bones that turned out to be human](#), officials said. The remains include a lower jawbone, rib bones and some unidentified bone pieces, Coahoma County, Mississippi, Chief Medical Examiner Scotty Meredith told CNN.

The Tennessee Valley Authority announced this week it would release more water from two dams to help supplement water levels on the Mississippi River. At Cairo, Illinois, the Mississippi "is approaching its lowest river level since 1901," the agency [noted on its Facebook page](#).

"To help stabilize commercial navigation conditions on the lower Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, we are scheduling special water releases from Kentucky Dam on the Tennessee River and Barkley Dam on the Cumberland River to help low river level impacts," the agency wrote.

Travis Brickey, a spokesperson for TVA, tells CNN that water from the dams is typically released on a fluctuating basis, as they operate on a "generate-stop-generate-stop" cycle.

But for the foreseeable future, the dams are releasing a consistent flow of water to help counteract the impact the ongoing drought is having on water levels.

The low water levels on the Mississippi come at a crucial time of the year for the transport of crops from the nation's heartland, [CNN has previously reported](#).

The Army Corps of Engineers has been dredging portions of the river to keep traffic flowing, albeit at a much slower pace. Hundreds of barges and vessels have been queuing up this month, waiting for the all-clear to pass through the treacherously low river.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Data: threats against local elected officials</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/new-report-tracks-over-400-threats-and-cases-of-harassment-against-local-officials/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/new-report-tracks-over-400-threats-and-cases-of-harassment-against-local-officials/</a>
GIST	<p>ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) and Princeton University's Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI) <a href="#">launched a new data collection initiative that tracks threats and harassment of local elected officials</a>. This first-of-its-kind project is an ongoing study to systematically evaluate threats and harassment of local officials across the United States using public event-based data.</p> <p>"Threats and harassment against local officials present a significant challenge to American democracy," said Oren Segal, Vice President of the ADL Center on Extremism. "This dataset shows the pervasiveness of threats and harassment around the country. We urge policymakers and communities to use these data to better understand this dangerous phenomenon and create better policy to more effectively count and counter future incidents."</p>

The research team scanned through over 10,000 datapoints from public sources, narrowing the search to more than 400 individual cases. Findings include:

- Threats of **death** and **gun violence** are more than twice as common as any other form of threat (13%).
- **Intimidation** was the overwhelming form of harassment (29%).
- Threats or harassment of **election officials** or **poll workers** span 21 states and make up about 34% of all incidents tracked. Of these incidents, the states with the highest percentage of threats or harassment incidents include **Pennsylvania** (16%), **Georgia** (14%), **Michigan** (13%) **Wisconsin** (10%), and **Arizona** (6%) which make up 59% of all threats or harassment to election officials or poll workers.
- **Women** officials were targeted at a higher frequency than others, totaling 42.5% of incidents. Adjusting for the proportion of women in local offices, the data reveal that women are targeted 3.4 times more than men.
- Approximately half of all recorded cases of threats and harassment targeted someone who had previously been targeted or who received **multiple threats**; the remainder were aimed at new targets.
- **Education**-related incidents revolved heavily around COVID-19 (61%), followed by so-called “critical race theory” (7%) and LGBTQ+ related issues (7%).

ADL and BDI partnered with other organizations in sharing data, including the Brennan Center for Justice, the National League of Cities, the Prosecution Project, and the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).

“Data-driven analysis is critical in helping communities respond to emerging challenges,” said Shannon Hiller, Director of Princeton University’s Bridging Divides Initiative. “By observing incidents and events data over time, researchers and policy makers can take action to protect civic space.”

As opposed to surveys and stories, event-based data allow for observed assessment of incidents. This permits the followers to understand patterns, and thus enable more effective evidence-driven policy.

The dataset is intended to grow as a “living dataset,” incorporating new variables and new cases over time. Future iterations will include expanding the analysis beyond local officials to state and federal, as well as specific data on the outcomes of threats and harassment, such as resignations of officials, charges against perpetrators, or measures communities can employ such as enhanced security.

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[Read more at ADL](#)

HEADLINE	10/23 Sawant fumes: SPD not investigating poop
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.yahoo.com/news/socialist-seattle-dem-pushed-police-152731869.html">https://www.yahoo.com/news/socialist-seattle-dem-pushed-police-152731869.html</a>
GIST	<p>A progressive member of the <a href="#">Seattle City Council</a> who has been a vocal critic of law enforcement amid the "defund the police" movement is criticizing police for not sufficiently pursuing reports of multiple instances of feces being thrown into her yard.</p> <p>Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, a self-described socialist, sent a letter to police in Seattle this week claiming they are "failing to investigate" what she says are six separate instances of a politically motivated person throwing feces into her yard," <a href="#">KCPQ-TV reported</a>.</p> <p>"There is obviously a glaring inconsistency between this approach and the way in which former Mayor Durkan, after a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest was held a short distance from her mansion, was provided with a 24-hour stakeout for a full year," Sawant wrote in her letter, suggesting she deserved police protection as a result of the incidents. "As a socialist City Councilmember who has participated in Black Lives Matter protests, I am being told that my case of six threatening incidents involving human excrement doesn't merit even a serious investigation, let alone protection."</p>

The Seattle Police Department, where staffing has dropped to a [30-year low](#) as officers left the force in droves amid the Defund the Police movement, asked the public for help catching the suspect this week by releasing photos of the individual.

"Friends of the victim were watching the home when the suspect threw a plastic bag, containing several individual bags of suspected human feces, into the yard," the police said without identifying Sawant as the victim. "The friends confronted the suspect and snapped multiple photos as he ran away. Witnesses described the suspect, pictured below, as an Asian man, approximately 5-foot 4-inches tall."

Sawant says she is planning to file a complaint against the police with the Office of Police Accountability.

Sawant was a leader of the charge to defund the police in Seattle over the last few years and proposed to slash the department's budget by \$85 million in 2020, [KIRO-TV reported](#). She was among the hundreds of protesters who occupied city hall in 2020 for about an hour, demanding then-Mayor Jenny Durkan resign and that the police department be defunded.

Sawant's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment from Fox News Digital.

In a statement, Seattle Police told KCPQ-TV that they take all [crime incidents](#) seriously.

"The department takes incidents involving public officials seriously, and investigators have canvassed for evidence, gathered information from witnesses and reviewed everything collected thus far," the police said. "At this time, the department has not found any evidence this case would meet the city or state standards for hate crime laws, but SPD will follow available leads should new information arise. The department encourages anyone with additional information about this case to contact police."

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HEADLINE	10/23 How water is weaponized in Ukraine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.yahoo.com/news/water-weaponised-ukraine-100225320-182102303.html">https://www.yahoo.com/news/water-weaponised-ukraine-100225320-182102303.html</a>
GIST	<p>MYKOLAIV, Ukraine (Reuters) -Sveta has no doubt about why the Ukrainian-held southern city of Mykolaiv, a ship-building centre that is home to a half a million people, has gone without fresh water for the past six months.</p> <p>"They (the Russians) are committing genocide against us," she growled as she waited this week with dozens of others to fill containers with water from tanks hauled to a downtown thoroughfare aboard an electric tramway repair car.</p> <p>The shutoff is bitter affirmation for Sveta, and some 220,000 other residents who remain in the oft-shelled city, that Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine extends beyond the battlefield to civilian infrastructure.</p> <p>The Kremlin has dramatically intensified strikes on energy facilities with pre-winter missile and drone onslaughts over the past two weeks, in what Putin has called legitimate retaliation for an attack on Russia's bridge to Crimea.</p> <p>The attacks have disrupted electricity across large parts of Ukraine, killing dozens of people and leaving other places without access to clean water.</p> <p>But Mykolaiv's water problems have gone on much longer.</p> <p>The Russians, Ukrainian officials say, closed the city's freshwater intakes in the adjacent Kherson province after they overran the region as part of what Putin calls "a special military operation."</p> <p>"We don't know whether this was an intentional explosion or an accidental ammunition strike," municipal water chief Borys Dydenko told Reuters. He said he believed the Russians shut the intakes to</p>



avenge Ukraine's closure of freshwater supplies to Crimea in 2014. The Kremlin and the Russian defence ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

### 'THE WAY WE LIVE'

Every day, Mykolaiv's residents lug plastic containers by hand or in carts to water distribution points across the city that sits at the sweeping confluence of the Dnipro and Southern Buh rivers.

"This is the way we live," lamented Yaroslav, 78, a retiree who worked at the Chernomorsk Shipbuilding Yard, as he queued behind Sveta. "We live through one day and there is no joy and then there is the next day."

Peter Gleick, a senior fellow at the Pacific Institute, a California thinktank that documents the impact of conflicts on water resources worldwide, said Russia has weaponised water since launching its full-scale invasion in February.

"Ukraine's water infrastructure, from dams to water treatment and wastewater systems, has been extensively targeted by Russia," Gleick wrote in an email. International law, he noted, makes striking civilian infrastructure a war crime.

In just the first three months of the war, Gleick said, he and his colleagues documented more than 60 instances in which Ukraine's civilian water supplies were disrupted and dams for both water and hydroelectric power attacked.

Russia has acknowledged targeting power plants while also saying it makes every effort to spare the civilian population. The United Nations has confirmed more than 14,000 civilian deaths and says actual numbers are likely considerably higher.

Ukraine, according to the Pacific Institute's database, has occasionally also used water as a weapon, cutting supplies off to Crimea after Russia seized the peninsula in 2014.

While Kyiv had no legal obligation to maintain the supply "it could be argued that it would have been a humanitarian thing to do," Gleick said.

Ukrainian troops released water from a Dnipro River dam to slow Russia's failed assault on Kyiv in February, according to the database. Residents in the eastern city of Donetsk, captured by Moscow-backed separatists in 2014, have also suffered water shortages. The Russian-installed government there did not immediately respond to a request for details of the situation.

Dydenko said Mykolaiv's water crisis was the worst.

"Others have problems of a local nature and are able to solve them," Dydenko told Reuters. "We are the only ones with such a colossal disaster."

After nearly a month without water, city officials were forced to begin pumping yellowish, salty water from the Southern Buh River estuary to clear sewers and let residents flush toilets and wash. It emits a pungent industrial odour, foams in toilets, and makes soap hard to lather and rinse.

Worst of all, it is corroding holes in the city's pipes.

### 'IT'S A CATASTROPHE'

Eventually, Dydenko said, the whole system will have to be replaced at a huge cost that Mykolaiv cannot meet, with factories idled and revenues from a dwindling population also down.

	<p>"It's a catastrophe," he said, accusing the Russians of refusing requests for a ceasefire so that the freshwater intakes could be inspected and any repairs made.</p> <p>Bottles of water are available in stores, but many residents, impoverished by war, depend on bottled water donations from abroad, even as pools of water snake onto streets from leaking mains.</p> <p>"This is the fifth leakage in three days," said Vitalii Tymoshchuk, 45, a repair crew foreman, standing by a hole dug for his mud-smeared men to fix the pipe in a Mykolaiv suburb.</p> <p>Dydenko said he has no choice but to keep his crews patching leaks as long as possible because the salt water is untreatable.</p> <p>"Our task today is to preserve all of this and last through the winter," he said. "It will not be easy and there will be more problems."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/24 Koreans in warning shots along sea border</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/23/koreas-exchange-warning-shots-along-sea-border-ami/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/23/koreas-exchange-warning-shots-along-sea-border-ami/</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea — The rival Koreas say they've exchanged warning shots along near their disputed western sea boundary.</p> <p>South Korea's military says its navy fired warning shots to repel a North Korean merchant ship that it says violated the sea boundary early Monday.</p> <p>North Korea's military said it's responded by firing 10 rounds of artillery shells as a warning to South Korea.</p> <p>There were no reports of clashes between the Koreas.</p> <p>The incident comes amid heightened tensions over North Korea's recent barrage of missile tests.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/24 Day 243 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/24/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-243-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/24/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-243-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russia has urged more civilians in occupied Kherson to flee amid an exodus to escape an anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive.</b> Russian authorities told residents to take "documents, money, valuables and clothes" due to "the tense situation on the front" and reported on Sunday that there had been "a sharp increase" in the number of civilians trying to flee. About 25,000 people have been evacuated since Tuesday, the Interfax news agency said.</li> <li>• <b>Russia's grip on Kherson <a href="#">appears increasingly fragile</a>.</b> The US thinktank the Institute for the Study of War said the urgent call to flee indicated that the occupiers "do not expect a rapid Russian or civilian return" to the city, and appeared to be trying to depopulate it to damage its "long-term social and economic viability".</li> <li>• <b>One person was killed by a homemade bomb in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson on Sunday, according to Russia-installed authorities in the region.</b> "An improvised explosive device, attached to a street pole and detonated remotely, killed a civilian from Kherson," local pro-Russian official Kirill Stremousov wrote on social media, adding that a passerby had been wounded, according to a report from Agence France-Presse.</li> <li>• <b>Russia and <a href="#">Ukraine</a> have accused each other of planning to blow up the Nova Kakhovka dam.</b> Breaching it could flood a swathe of southern Ukraine, including Kherson.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine and the US denounced suggestions from Russia that Ukraine was preparing to use a "dirty bomb" as dangerous lies.</b> "If Russia calls and says that Ukraine is allegedly preparing something, it means one thing: Russia has already prepared all this," Ukraine's president</li> </ul>



	<p>Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in a video address. The White House national security council also rejected Shoigu's claims. "The world would see through any attempt to use this allegation as a pretext for escalation," a statement said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A Russian fighter jet crashed in Siberia, <a href="#">killing two crew members</a>.</b> The Su-30 fighter jet came down on a private, two-storey building housing two families in Irkutsk, a major industrial centre in eastern Siberia. The crash appears to reflect the growing strain that the fighting in Ukraine has put on the Russian air force.</li> <li>• <b>Iran has said it will supply Russia with 40 turbines to help its gas industry amid western sanctions over Moscow's war in Ukraine, local media reported.</b> Iran's "industrial successes are not limited to the fields of missiles and drones", Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company's CEO, Reza Noushadi, was quoted as saying by Shana, the oil ministry's news agency on Sunday.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine's special operations forces said that Iranian drone instructors have been spotted in Belarus.</b> According to special operations forces, Iran's Islamic revolutionary guard corps are training Russian forces in Belarus and coordinating the launches of Iranian-made drones.</li> <li>• <b>Russia fired missiles and drones into Ukrainian-held Mykolaiv on Sunday, destroying an apartment block.</b> Mykolaiv lies roughly 35 km (22 miles) northwest of the frontline to occupied Kherson</li> <li>• <b>UK defence secretary, Ben Wallace, rebutted claims made by the Russian defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, that Ukraine, facilitated by western counties including UK, was planning to escalate the conflict.</b> "The defence secretary refuted these claims and cautioned that such allegations should not be used as a pretext for greater escalation," the UK Ministry of Defence said in a statement after talks between the UK and Russia.</li> <li>• <b>French president Emmanuel Macron said it's up to Ukraine to decide the time and terms of peace with Russia,</b> and cautioned that the end of war "can't be the consecration of the law of the strongest." "To stay neutral would mean accepting the world order of the strongest, and I don't agree with this," Macron said at the opening of a three-day peace conference in Rome on Sunday.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine faces power outages after <a href="#">Russian strikes target energy facilities</a>.</b> Russian airstrikes on energy infrastructure across the country have left more than a million households in Ukraine without electricity, the deputy head of the Ukrainian presidency, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, said at the weekend.</li> <li>• <b>A German lobby group representing companies with interests in eastern <a href="#">Europe</a> has called for a plan to rebuild Ukraine that would mirror the Marshall plan</b> that helped Europe recover from the second world war, the media group RND reported. A Ukraine-Germany business forum in Berlin on Monday will discuss the plan set to be attended by German chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukrainian prime minister Denys Shmyhal.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	10/24 US denounces Kremlin 'dirty bomb' claim
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/24/us-dismisses-transparently-false-russian-claims-of-ukraine-plan-to-use-dirty-bomb">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/24/us-dismisses-transparently-false-russian-claims-of-ukraine-plan-to-use-dirty-bomb</a>
GIST	<p>The US has rejected as "transparently false" Russia's evidence-free claim that <a href="#">Ukraine</a> is preparing to use a "dirty bomb" on its own territory as part of an escalation of Vladimir Putin's war.</p> <p>Secretary of state Antony Blinken <a href="#">told</a> his Ukrainian counterpart, Dmytro Kuleba, on Sunday "the world would see through any attempt by Russia to use this allegation as a pretext for escalation", and vowed to continue supporting Kyiv for as long as necessary.</p> <p>Earlier on Sunday, Kuleba denounced Moscow's claims as "absurd" and "dangerous", adding: "Russians often accuse others of what they plan themselves".</p> <p>Ukrainian president <a href="#">Volodymyr Zelenskiy</a> reacted swiftly to Moscow's claims, calling for a united international response. "If Russia calls and says that Ukraine is allegedly preparing something, it means one thing: Russia has already prepared all this," Zelenskiy said in a video address on social media. "I believe that now the world should react as harshly as possible."</p>

Zelenakiy said everyone “understands who is the source of everything dirty that can be imagined in this war. It was Russia who blackmailed with the radiation disaster at the Zaporizhzhia NPP [nuclear power plant].”

On Sunday, Russia’s defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, spoke to his British, French and Turkish counterparts and claimed in all three meetings that Ukraine may use a “dirty bomb”, a conventional weapon containing radioactive material. Shoigu also spoke to Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin, but Moscow did not mention the dirty bomb allegations in its statement summarising that call.

The Russian minister cited no evidence for this claim as he warned of “possible provocations” on the part of Kyiv.

There is no evidence that Ukraine, which gave up its nuclear weapons in the 1990s, has any radioactive material in its military arsenal.

The UK Ministry of Defence said in a statement: “Shoigu alleged that Ukraine was planning actions facilitated by western countries, including the UK, to escalate the conflict in Ukraine. The defence secretary refuted these claims and cautioned that such allegations should not be used as a pretext for greater escalation.”

The Institute for the Study of War said a “false flag” operation by Russia was unlikely, dismissing Shoigu’s calls as a sabre-rattling move designed to intimidate Ukraine’s western allies and split the Nato alliance.

Russia faces continued military setbacks, including the [likely loss of western Kherson](#) by the end of the year, it said.

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HEADLINE	10/23 France nuclear power reactors malfunction
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/frances-nuclear-reactors-malfunction-as-energy-crisis-bites-11666517581?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/frances-nuclear-reactors-malfunction-as-energy-crisis-bites-11666517581?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS—France is falling behind in its plans to return the country’s fleet of nuclear reactors to full power this winter after a rash of outages, raising fears that one of Europe’s key sources of electricity won’t be ramped up to counter Russia’s <a href="#">squeeze on the continent’s energy supplies</a>.</p> <p>The nuclear fleet was designed to act as the front line of France’s energy security. Since Moscow cut the flow of natural gas to Europe—plunging the continent into <a href="#">its biggest energy crisis</a> since the 1970s oil shock—France’s vaunted nuclear fleet has been about as effective as the Maginot Line, the French fortifications that did little to stop the German invasion during World War II.</p> <p>Twenty-six of France’s 56 <a href="#">nuclear reactors are offline</a> for maintenance or because of corrosion on piping that cools the reactor cores. Fixing the corrosion is taking longer than expected at several reactors, delaying their restart by as much as six weeks, according to regulatory filings and a French nuclear executive familiar with the matter.</p> <p>Labor unrest is another obstacle. Strikes at 18 reactors owned by EDF SA, France’s state-controlled power giant, have delayed their restart by several weeks, threatening the government’s plans to have all of them back online by the end of the winter. EDF and union leaders said they reached an agreement Friday on salary increases, ending the strikes.</p> <p>“It’s important that this work restarts as soon as possible,” said Emmanuelle Wargon, head of France’s energy regulator. “If not, the risk of not having electricity rises.”</p>

EDF, the world's [largest owner of nuclear plants](#), is one of Western Europe's most important power companies. Its fleet of reactors normally exports large quantities of low-cost nuclear power to neighboring countries, helping stabilize prices across the region.

The situation changed drastically this year, when France swung from being one of Europe's largest exporters of electricity to a net importer because of the outages at its reactors. The rash of outages has officials worried that France and the broader region might run short of electricity in the winter, when power demand in Europe peaks.

Soaring energy prices have fueled labor unrest that is compounding France's energy problems. A strike by French refinery workers led by the CGT, France's far-left union, has created gasoline and diesel shortages across the country. The workers are demanding a 10% pay increase to cope with inflation. CGT workers have also led the strike at EDF, demanding a minimum pay increase of €200 a month, or roughly \$200.

Virginie Neumayer, a CGT leader at EDF, said their strike has targeted the reactors that were either undergoing maintenance or taken offline for refueling. It hasn't slowed repairs at around 12 of the reactors that were taken offline because of suspicions of corrosion, Ms. Neumayer said.

Still, two reactors that were shut down to check for corrosion have had their startup dates pushed back by as long as six weeks, according to regulatory notices. One of them, at the Flamanville plant on France's north coast, was delayed from Oct. 9 to Nov. 26; startup at the other reactor, at the Bugey plant near Lyon, was pushed back from Sept. 30 to Nov. 3.

A French nuclear executive said those delays were the result of unanticipated complications in the repairs. The executive said repairs at the Chooz nuclear plant on the Belgian border were also taking longer than anticipated, jeopardizing a Nov. 13 startup date for the first of the plant's two reactors. The strike could have an impact on the repairs if workers are diverted to work on maintenance rather than fixing corrosion, the executive said.

An EDF spokeswoman declined to comment on delays to the restart of the French reactors.

The corrosion problem is at the origin of the series of EDF outages this year. A technician discovered the problem late last year at Civaux, France's youngest nuclear-power plant. The phenomenon, known as stress corrosion, was identified on welds for pipes that are under high pressure near the reactor core, according to France's Nuclear Safety Authority. Engineers inspected the same section of piping in other reactors and found similar problems.

The issue prompted EDF to accelerate maintenance and refueling of other reactors to ensure that they could be available this winter, given that the availability of the reactors where corrosion was suspected was in doubt.

French nuclear experts have said EDF's calendar for repairing the reactors is ambitious given the difficulty of the work. Repairs on the corroded pipes must be performed within the radioactive containment area of the plants, limiting the time that welders can spend on the job because of rules limiting their radiation exposure.

Officials believe the corrosion is the result of changes that France made to a reactor design by U.S. company Westinghouse Electric Co. that is the basis for a number of French reactors. The design also underpins the U.K.'s Sizewell B reactor, which is owned by EDF's British subsidiary, EDF Energy.

EDF Energy is planning to inspect pipes close to Sizewell B's reactor core when it is shut down for planned maintenance in February, said spokeswoman Marjorie Barnes.

Detecting the phenomenon is difficult because it can incubate for decades without producing warning signs.

	<p>“It is only possible to identify its presence once cracking has begun,” according to a note from France’s Institute for Radioprotection and Nuclear Safety. “Regular inspections of the pipes can only identify the phenomenon once a fault is present.”</p> <p>The outages have forced EDF to absorb huge losses because the company was forced to buy replacement power on Europe’s wholesale market, where prices have soared, for sale to retail clients at much lower prices. Last month, the company said the outages would hit pretax earnings this year by around \$29 billion. That comes on top of more than \$10 billion in losses the company is likely to book because of the French government’s decision to cap retail electricity prices.</p> <p>The government of President Emmanuel Macron said in July that it would buy the 16% of EDF that the state didn’t already own, at a cost of nearly \$10 billion.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/24 China releases delayed key economic data</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/24/china-gdp-xi-jinping-economic-growth/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/24/china-gdp-xi-jinping-economic-growth/</a>
GIST	<p>China on Monday unexpectedly released delayed economic data a day after the conclusion of a key Communist Party congress, showing weak growth and prompting markets to plunge.</p> <p>Last week, China’s National Bureau of Statistics postponed the release of GDP and other economic indicators without explanation the day before their scheduled reporting on Oct. 18. The release would have coincided with the congress in Beijing where Chinese leader <a href="#">Xi Jinping went on to secure a third term and filled top leadership positions</a> exclusively with his allies.</p> <p>The release of this key economic data just after the congress adds to concerns that under Xi, politics will increasingly trump economic priorities.</p> <p>On Monday, the bureau reported that gross domestic product grew 3.9 percent between July and September of this year, slightly higher than analyst expectations but still below the government’s target annual goal of “around 5.5 percent.”</p> <p>Following the release of the data, Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Index plunged 6 percent to levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis, while the Shanghai Composite and the Shenzhen Composite Index both fell around 2 percent.</p> <p>China’s economy has been battered by a property slump, rising unemployment, slower consumption and continued covid controls enforced through lockdowns and onerous testing requirements for residents. Official data on Monday showed unemployment rose to 5.5 percent in September, up from 5.3 percent in August.</p> <p>Under Xi, high economic growth, once a top priority for the leadership, has taken a back seat to political objectives. The government has increased controls over the private sector while expanding the role of state-backed companies and focusing on reducing inequality.</p> <p>On Sunday, party personnel changes were announced that included the retiring of officials seen as more committed to market reforms.</p> <p>During his <a href="#">report to congress</a> delivered last week, Xi said his party would ensure that wealth and income were “well regulated,” and should improve the personal income tax system, prompting speculation that China may introduce new taxes on the wealthy in the name of “common prosperity,” one of his landmark campaigns.</p> <p>Xi claimed that the global economy “needs China” and that the world’s second largest economy has “great resilience, potential and latitude.”</p>

HEADLINE	<b>10/24 Russia deepens influence in West Africa</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/24/russia-west-africa-influence-wagner/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/24/russia-west-africa-influence-wagner/</a>
GIST	<p><b>At the end of September, Burkina Faso experienced its second coup of the year.</b> A military putsch in the West African nation brought down the prevailing junta and made 34-year-old Capt. Ibrahim Traoré the youngest national leader in all of Africa. The coup, largely bloodless, was <a href="#">denounced by the African Union</a>, and E.U. and <a href="#">U.S. officials</a>. But cheers came from a conspicuous corner of the world.</p> <p>In a message posted via the Telegram app, Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a Russian oligarch close to President Vladimir Putin’s inner circle and head of the <a href="#">Wagner Group</a>, a shadowy mercenary company that Western experts view as a Kremlin proxy, said Traoré’s power grab “was necessary.” He described the previously little-known captain as “a truly worthy and courageous son of his motherland” and cast the grave security troubles wracking the West African nation as part of France’s imperial legacy.</p> <p>“The people of Burkina Faso were under the yoke of the colonialists, who robbed the people as well as played their vile games, trained, supported gangs of bandits and caused much grief to the local population,” Prigozhin <a href="#">said</a>. Scenes of jubilant pro-coup supporters in the capital Ouagadougou showed some waving Russian flags, a reflection both of the reach of Russian propaganda networks as well as popular frustration with a status quo some link to Western policy. That includes a decade-long French counterterrorism campaign in the nations of the central Sahel, the vast sweep of semiarid land south of the Sahara desert.</p> <p>Burkina Faso is in the grips of a harrowing security crisis. Islamist militants control swaths of the country. Thousands of civilians have been killed this year alone, while some 2 million people — a fifth of the Burkinabe population — have been displaced by the fighting. Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, the previous coup leader who Traoré supplanted, himself seized power in January on grounds that the government was failing the military in its battles against insurgents.</p> <p>“Faced with the deteriorating situation, we tried several times to get Damiba to refocus the transition on the security question,” Traoré said in a signed statement read out by another officer on state television after the latest coup.</p> <p><b>Experts now see Russia <a href="#">exploiting the vacuum</a>.</b> Since at least 2018, the Wagner Group has been enlisted to help fragile African regimes crack down on Islamist extremist insurgencies. In the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Libya and now Mali, Russian military contractors have operated on the ground alongside local forces. In some instances, they’ve been <a href="#">linked to reports of human rights abuses</a> and possible war crimes.</p> <p>Since the Sept. 30 coup in Burkina Faso, there have been growing suggestions that the new junta will consider forging a new “strategic partnership” with Moscow and pivot away from earlier understandings with Western powers. Prigozhin’s rhetoric may be self-serving, but also could indicate <a href="#">a growing Russian influence</a>.</p> <p>“Rather than being a transparent partner and improving security, Wagner exploits client states who pay for their heavy-handed security services in gold, diamonds, timber and other natural resources — this is part of Wagner Group’s business model,” Linda Thomas-Greenfield, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, <a href="#">told</a> a Security Council briefing earlier this month. “We know these ill-gotten gains are used to fund Moscow’s war machine in Africa, the Middle East and Ukraine.”</p> <p>“In previous coups Russia has tried to position itself as an accidental beneficiary of regime changes,” Samuel Ramani, an analyst at Britain’s Royal United Services Institute, <a href="#">told the BBC</a>. “This time around Russia is a lot more proactive in support for the coup, and that has led to speculation that Russia has played a co-ordinating role.”</p>



Though it's unclear what actual presence Russia does or will have in Burkina Faso, the coup sets the stage for a new chapter in a broader geopolitical contest. Some African nations, including a handful of states in West Africa, have [conspicuously backed Russia](#) at the United Nations and in other forums as Moscow ducks international censure for its invasion and ongoing war in Ukraine.

**“What we see is that the Sahel is becoming a battlefield for the rivalry between Russia and the West,”** said Jean-Hervé Jezequel, Sahel director for the International Crisis Group, in [a podcast episode](#) recently released by the think tank. “This is an additional layer in an already complex crisis,” he added, suggesting that great power competition in this part of the world would only make things more difficult for local actors struggling to forge peace.

The struggle is already acute in cyberspace, with Kremlin-linked online accounts animating the discourse across the region. “Pro-Russian networks today are especially targeting West and Central African nations grappling with conflict,” [my colleague Danielle Paquette reported earlier this year](#). “Among them are Burkina Faso and Mali, which both face fast-growing insurgencies and have endured a combined three” — now, four — “coups d'état since 2020. They're also home to deep reserves of gold and other precious minerals that analysts say Moscow covets.”

Mali, Burkina Faso's larger neighbor, provides the sharpest illustration of the dynamics. For close to a decade, it was the main staging ground for [a French military mission](#) aimed at beating back the advances of extremist militant factions, including al-Qaeda, Islamic State-linked groups and ethnic Tuareg separatists. But after initial successes, the operation bogged down and [anti-French sentiment grew](#).

The last French detachments left Mali for neighboring Niger earlier this year, with the prevailing regime in Bamako — also installed after a military coup — cheering their departure. Mali has more publicly turned toward Russia in years. In September at the U.N. General Assembly, Malian Prime Minister Abdoulaye Maiga [celebrated](#) the “exemplary and fruitful cooperation between Mali and Russia” and said it spoke of a larger transition in a region long dominated by France, the former colonial power. “Move on from the colonial past and hear the anger, the frustration, the rejection that is coming up from the African cities and countryside, and understand that this movement is inexorable,” Maiga said.

Wagner forces are active in the country, operating alongside Malian soldiers. They have been linked to a string of civilian massacres, including [the extrajudicial execution of some 300 people](#) in a village in central Mali in March.

“What we observe is that elsewhere in Africa today there are worrying deployments of the Wagner militias, and we have been able to see on the ground that the effects of these militias lead to abuses of the population — we saw crimes that unfolded in Mali, in the Central African Republic, in Mozambique — also the pillaging of natural resources, and most of all, zero effectiveness in the fight against terrorism,” said Anne-Claire Legendre, French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, [to the Associated Press last week](#).

Critics, of course, can also point to France's limited efficacy. “In the eyes of the Malian government ... the French-led system of stabilization has not prevented the expansion of the jihadists in the Sahel,” [Jezequel said](#). “In 10 years, the presence of the jihadists has expanded dramatically.”

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HEADLINE	10/23 Central WA drinking water wells tainted
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/heartache-anger-in-central-washington-over-drinking-water-wells-tainted-by-forever-chemicals/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/heartache-anger-in-central-washington-over-drinking-water-wells-tainted-by-forever-chemicals/</a>
GIST	<p>SELAH, Yakima County — In 2016, Brandi and Brad Hyatt purchased a three-bedroom home with sweeping views of the Cascades, Mount Rainier and Mount Adams.</p> <p>Their house sits more than 4 miles east of this Central Washington community, beyond the reach of Selah's public water system. So, the couple and their two children relied on a well punched into a basalt lava rock aquifer to quench their thirst, cook, clean and bathe.</p>



In February two U.S. Army representatives knocked on the Hyatts' door to deliver cases of bottled water and a carefully worded letter that noted a "potential risk to human health."

The Hyatts' well was one of 300 residential drinking water wells tested for contamination from two firefighting foam chemicals that seeped into groundwater flows from the Army's Yakima Training Center.

They are part of a class of "forever chemicals" — per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances known as PFAS — that rank as one of the most pervasive sources of pollution on the planet. They are found in soil, air, water and even the snow of Antarctica.

In the human body, the two firefighting foam chemicals may disrupt the immune system, interfere with hormones, increase the risk of prostate, kidney and testicular cancers, high blood pressure in pregnant women and harm the reproductive system, according to studies cited by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Brandi Hyatt, after moving into house, started suffering from a thyroid condition with symptoms that included chronic fatigue, shortness of breath, stomach and chest pains. Some studies have shown that the firefighting foam chemicals, which were present in each glass of water she filled from the family tap, increase the risks of such illness.

"So many people have thyroid diseases, and I have always been a bit embarrassed by how out of control mine is," Hyatt said. "Why is mine so all over the map? Maybe it is this poison that my body can't clear — that I've been drinking for years now."

Yakima Training Center is one of five military installations in Washington state where PFAS was used and then later detected in drinking water wells in neighboring communities.

Since the summer of 2021, the Army has been investigating the spread of these chemicals to residences around the training center by paying to test wells. Army officials use the results to determine who to provide bottled water as well as longer-term assistance that will provide safe flows of water for drinking and other uses.

In Yakima and elsewhere, the Defense Department has set this threshold at the level of a 2016 U. S. Environmental Protection Agency advisory, which had set the limit at 70 parts per trillion for someone drinking from the same water source through the course of their lifetime.

In June, however, the EPA dramatically lowered the lifetime advisory level of the two chemicals to less than 1 part per trillion.

Washington state officials earlier this year also set a much limit lower than the Defense Department as an "action level" when efforts should be made to reduce contamination. In the Yakima area, they have sought to get the Army to provide assistance for any residents with test results that exceed those limits.

"What we have been pushing for all along is to address that gap," according to a state Ecology Department official Greg Caron, who has met with Army officials.

But the Army, so far, has stuck to the old, much higher threshold that the Defense Department has used across the country.

In Yakima, that policy has sown confusion and distrust among some residents whose homes sit downslope from the Yakima Training Center.

The Army-financed tests found 155 wells tested positive above the new EPA advisory level, according to a Seattle Times analysis of test results. But only 62 well owners currently qualify for Defense Department assistance.

That leaves many others in a kind of limbo, with many hoping that the Defense Department standards will eventually change to include their wells.

“I’m not getting any help whatsoever,” said Karen Pruitt, whose family has been drinking well water for 30 years that earlier this year tested positive but below the 70 parts Army threshold but still far above the state level.

Some residents also question whether the chemical contamination has contributed to the illnesses of pets that sickened and died at early age. Some have spent their own money for well filtration to provide clean water for their homes and to irrigate their land.

“Not everybody can do that,” said Lance Ostrom, who spent more than \$7,000 for the system to provide clean water. “At least we have water that’s not toxic.”

Army officials say they have made a lot of progress during the past year in determining the scope of the contamination.

The households that receive aid have wells that tested between 71 and 1,650 parts per trillion. In the weeks ahead, an Army contractor will visit these homeowners and figure out the best ways to move beyond bottled water to provide clean flows to taps, and then will be paid to make that happen.

“We understand this is a huge issue. That it’s a hard problem that’s not going away,” said Lt. Col. Tim Horn, who commands the Yakima Training Center. “But we’re not going away either. We are trying to do the best we can for everyone.”

#### **Research intensifies as PFAS spreads**

PFAS [can be found](#) in products ranging from [nonstick pans](#) to [waterproof coatings on jackets](#), [fast food wrappers](#) and even [some kinds of dental floss](#). Since first brought into market in the 1950s, they have been used in hundreds of different manufacturing and industrial processes.

People most often are exposed to PFAS as they eat food or drink water that contains traces of the chemicals, but they can also take it into their bodies in other ways, such as breathing contaminated dust.

A survey completed in 2000 indicated the two chemicals — PFOA and PFOS — were present in the blood of 98% of the U.S. population. And when people routinely consume water contaminated with PFAS, the level in their blood may rise a lot higher.

Earlier this year, a federal public health agency [released a survey](#) of PFAS blood levels in 333 residents who live in Airway Heights, a city near Spokane with a public water system contaminated until 2017 with firefighting foam chemicals used at nearby Fairchild Air Force Base.

That study found that the Airway Heights residents had levels more than eight times higher than the national average for PFOS, and more than five times higher for PFOA, and 56 times higher for a third chemical used in firefighting foams.

In Yakima County, the pollution appeared to spread from the 327,000-acre Army Training Center, which is used by Army and National Guard soldiers to practice maneuvers in an arid sagebrush landscape.

For decades, the risk of an aircraft crash at the training center spurred firefighting training. Until 1990, firefighters, most often twice a year, ignited 500 to 1,000 gallons of waste fuel in an unlined pit. Then, they deployed a foam that contained PFOA and PFOS to extinguish the blaze.

The fuel-soaked soil left behind prompted the Army, from 2003 to 2006, to contract a cleanup.

“We basically dug out everything that we could until we hit bedrock,” said Caron, the state Department of Ecology official based in Yakima who monitored that effort. “But at that point, we weren’t testing for PFAS. It wasn’t even on anyone’s radar.”

By 2020, the risks of PFOA and PFOS had prompted U.S. manufacturers to phase out production of the chemicals. That year, the Army financed a new round of testing for these chemicals in groundwater around the pit. The lab results revealed serious pollution of the groundwater under the pit, and contamination was also detected at six other sites.

Through the decades, the chemical plume likely followed the movement of a groundwater aquifer that flows west off the Army’s land to downslope areas now subdivided into tracts with rural residences relying on wells for drinking water.

In such wells, the EPA through the years has dramatically revised the health risk assessment.

In 2009, the advisory for someone drinking from the same water source through the course of their life was 200 parts per trillion for PFOS and 400 parts per trillion for PFOA.

In 2016, this advisory was dropped to a combined level of 70 parts per trillion.

Then, the EPA announcement in June stated that this advisory was being replaced with a new one that put levels for both chemicals at far below 1 part per trillion. This reflected new science, including studies that found PFAS can reduce the effectiveness of tetanus, diphtheria and other vaccines, according to an EPA statement.

“These compounds are toxic at much lower levels than previously thought,” said Melanie Benesh, vice president of government affairs with the Environmental Working Group, which has investigated PFAS pollution in the United States and advocated for regulatory forms.

The 2022 EPA advisory levels are so low that they cannot be reliably detected by current tests. That means any positive test for the two chemicals — no matter how small — is over these limits.

Defense Department officials have said they may eventually lower the threshold for determining who gets assistance. That is likely to happen when the EPA sets a regulatory standard for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water that public water systems need to meet.

Since the June EPA advisory is below the limits that can be detected in laboratory analysis, the agency’s regulatory standard is expected to be higher so that utilities can test water samples and monitor for compliance.

EPA officials say this new rule should be finalized before the end of next year.

“The government process isn’t always as fast as you would like it be,” said Horn, the Yakima Training Center commander.

### **Washington officials’ frustration grows**

The Army investigation of Yakima drinking water has been monitored by officials from the state departments of Ecology and Health, tasked by the Legislature with reducing PFAS pollution and human exposure in Washington.

Caron, the Yakima-based state Ecology official, said he has repeatedly pressed Army officials to share more information about the locations of contaminated drinking water wells.

The Army, citing the need to protect homeowners’ privacy, has declined to do that.

The Army also has not consented to an Ecology Department request, first proposed in 2020 and again this summer, that would make the state agency a partner in the Yakima Training Center groundwater pollution cleanup.

Caron said the Army needs to develop a long-term plan for monitoring drinking water wells that considers how chemical concentrations may change as water flows through the aquifer.

So far, Caron said, the Army has failed to commit to a schedule for such sampling or to include wells that did not qualify for Defense Department assistance but might trend higher over time.

State officials have developed a briefing document for the state's congressional delegation to help bolster support for their effort. They also are considering issuing an enforcement order that could lead to a court battle over the cleanup.

"We are pretty frustrated," Carson said.

State health department officials are also on edge.

They fault the Defense Department for portraying PFAS levels up to 70 parts per trillion as levels in drinking water. The state action levels that took effect Jan. 1 recommend control efforts, such as granular activated carbon filters, when PFOS reaches 15 parts per trillion in drinking water, or PFOA reaches 10 parts per trillion.

"If the Army says that there's no further action needed, that's according to the Army. That's not according to us," said Barbara Morrissey, a toxicologist with the state Department of Health.

A Seattle Times analysis of test results found that 31 wells exceeded the state standard but were not high enough for Army assistance.

### **Weary of bottled water**

For well owners receiving Army assistance, the long-term plans for the taxpayer-financed cleanup range from installing granulate activated filtration systems to drilling deeper wells that could tap into PFAS-free water. There also is a possibility of hooking up to an alternate source.

In the meantime, delivery trucks each week drop off bottles of drinking water. Army officials have told residents they will provide sufficient allocations for drinking and cooking — about seven gallons per person per week — but not broader household use.

For some, that's a problem.

Victoria and Torin Antijunti lack PFAS-free water for their cows and chickens. They are worried about selling meat and eggs that may contain traces of PFAS, but there are currently no regulations stipulating safe levels of PFAS in food, nor any state or federal testing programs that would foot the bill for laboratory analysis.

The Antijuntis also use well water to bathe their three young boys, Hank, who is 4, and 7-month-old twins Bowen and Walker.

"You know when I'm showering my kids, they put water in their mouth, no matter what," said Tori, 31.

Now a radiological technician at a Yakima urgent care center, Victoria Antijunti grew up within a quarter-mile of the Yakima Training Center and has been largely drinking from local well water since she was 5 years old. In 2016, she and her husband moved even closer to the post.

Within the past year, her parents' well tested positive for low levels of several firefighting chemicals, including PFOA and PFOS, at just under 70 parts per trillion, while her own well tested at just over that threshold.

Tori Antijunti is troubled by the possible impacts of her long-term exposure to the chemicals.

One of the twins — Bowen — was born with a severe heart defect called hypoplastic left heart syndrome. He has required two open heart surgeries, and will need a third as well as longterm surveillance. Antijunti calls him her "miracle child."

She recently learned that her other twin son has a less serious heart condition.

Antijunti said she worries a lot about the possibility that Bowen's heart defect is linked to the chemicals in the well water.

So far, the case for PFAS elevating the risk for heart or other birth defects is muddled. Laboratory animal studies have shown PFAS can increase the risks of birth defects in animals, and a recent study in China found the chemicals "may contribute" to congenital heart defects. But a large U.S. epidemiological study of the firefighting foam chemical PFOA did not find associations between elevated levels of the chemical in blood and most birth defects, including those in the heart.

"My mind thinks that maybe it could have been something that caused this instead of, you know, just happening," she said. "I always wonder. And I've been drinking it for so long."

Brandi Hyatt drank from her family's well for six years. The PFOA and PFOS contamination was more than triple the level of the Antijuntis' well. Through a difficult summer battling her thyroid condition, she fretted about the health toll that the chemicals may have taken.

Hyatt was troubled to learn that her neighbor — who drank a lot of water when weight training — also came down with a thyroid condition.

She and her husband, Brad, have many family members, and deep roots, in Yakima County. But they weary of bottled water and are considering moving — perhaps to a beach community in Oregon — if they can find a buyer who will not be spooked by the well contamination.

"It's a huge thing for us to feel like that," Hyatt said "We haven't made any final decisions."

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HEADLINE	10/23 Homeless camp Ship Canal Bridge grows
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/homeless/homeless-encampment-ship-canal-bridge/281-d83c6f83-803a-4c03-87c7-0ee65607915a">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/homeless/homeless-encampment-ship-canal-bridge/281-d83c6f83-803a-4c03-87c7-0ee65607915a</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A homeless encampment under the north side of the Ship Canal Bridge has some neighbors concerned as it continues to grow.</p> <p>"These people have no place to go, what are you going to do with them," said Jon Kuring.</p> <p>The people he's talking about are those currently living in a homeless encampment, found right under the north side of the <a href="#">Ship Canal Bridge</a>, near 5th Avenue NE and NE 42nd Street.</p> <p>"There were several encampments over the years, but this is the one that stuck, the other encampments they've swept. And this one, just grew massively," said Kuring.</p> <p>Kuring lives right across the street from the encampment, and said he's seen a lot just outside his window. Trash has continued to build up, along with people fighting and starting fires. Despite those issues, he feels for the folks just outside his door.</p>

"They're on drugs or whatever or they're mentally ill, they've been out here so long, the stress of living on the street, creates mental illness," said Kuring. "I was on the street myself for 22 years so I kind of know what's going on."

KING 5 reached out to Seattle City Councilmember Alex Pedersen, who represents this area, and Pedersen told KING 5 the property is owned by the state. Pedersen sent KING 5 a statement saying in part:

*"Reducing homelessness and increasing safety must be top priorities at all levels of government, and I continue to urge the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) to get the job done with the resources and authority granted to them, so the neighborhoods adjacent to problematic State government properties can be safe again."*

Councilmember Pedersen also sent KING 5 an email he received from Brian Nielsen, WSDOT's Administrator for the Northwest Region. Nielsen sent an email regarding the Ship Canal homeless encampment:

"We hear from people who are frustrated and want fast solutions, but we've found during recent years that connections to services and housing are necessary for stopping the cycle of displacement and encampment.

This process takes time and work from skilled outreach teams.

There are four actions that allow encampments to be removed from WSDOT right of way:

1. The offering of shelter and services to people living there (local jurisdiction & service/outreach providers; funding offered by Commerce)
2. Secure storage of their belongings (local jurisdiction & service/outreach providers)
3. Safety and security for people on site and work crews (local law enforcement & WSP)
4. Restoration and cleanup of the property (WSDOT)

WSDOT's responsibility and expertise is limited to the last action, the clean-up of right of way. As a transportation agency, WSDOT must rely on the expertise and collaboration of local and nonprofit partners who are able to provide the necessary services that are essential to successfully address the needs of people experiencing homelessness."

Kuring said he's seen some crews picking up trash every couple weeks, but believes more needs to be done.

"Otherwise, it's going to be an endless cycle of addiction and homelessness, like it was for me," said Kuring.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 First snow of the season falls in mountains</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/first-snow-season-falls-mountains/CQXT3VDTFRBJXFOWUMIX2LIHWY/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/first-snow-season-falls-mountains/CQXT3VDTFRBJXFOWUMIX2LIHWY/</a>
GIST	<p>Snow returns to the mountains for the first time this season, to the delight of many.</p> <p>A few days ago, we were dealing with historically high temperatures, no precipitation and the poorest air quality in the world.</p> <p>Now the air has cleared and snow is falling once again in the mountains.</p> <p>What a difference a few days makes. From smoky, dry air to this weather, with precipitation of all kinds. Fall, it appears, is finally here.</p> <p>It is a sight for our smoke-weary eyes, with ever-so-light snow falling on Stevens Pass.</p> <p>It was a nice surprise for Maria and Marco Suarez, who left their Woodinville home not knowing what they'd find.</p>



“And my husband say(s), ‘Let’s go and drive and see what we can see,’” she said. “So, and then we saw this. It’s so beautiful. This is the first time we see it like this. We usually come in January, but it’s so beautiful.”

Then there is the air.

“It’s been terrible until yesterday,” said Tom Beales of Bothell. “Yeah, it’s been really bad. So, we just got out of town to enjoy the fresh air.”

Drone 7 captured the smoky skies that covered Highway 2 and beyond like a dirty blanket for much of this week.

The Bolt Creek Fire had chewed through more than 14,000 acres in five bone-dry weeks, with low humidity, high temperatures and easterly winds pushing the foul air far beyond its borders.

Marcia DeRuiter, a nurse from Baring, said that she knows the hazards of being in the thick of it.

“The smoke is not good for people to be breathing that smoke,” said DeRuiter. “It gets in their lungs and causes lots of issues.”

The signs of the wildfire damage are still there, coming uncomfortably close, in some spots, to Highway 2, with much of this area off-limits since the fire started on Sept. 10.

The precipitation and the shifting westerly winds are a reminder of what October is usually like in western Washington.

“It’s awesome,” said Beales. “It’s nice. It’s coming. Fall is here, right?”

Indeed, it is.

However, we both saw smoke coming from some burning timbers along Highway 2.

So, we will need still more rain and some snow.

But so far, no one is complaining.

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HEADLINE	10/23 China leader now wields formidable power
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-loyalists.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/world/asia/xi-jinping-china-loyalists.html</a>
GIST	<p>When China’s leader, Xi Jinping, led six dark-suited men onto a bright red stage on Sunday, the scale of his victory became clear as one by one he introduced the country’s new ruling inner circle. Each was an acolyte of Mr. Xi, making his grip over China’s future tighter than ever.</p> <p>Mr. Xi’s groundbreaking third term as leader, following a weeklong Communist Party congress, was entirely expected. But even seasoned observers who thought that they had taken the full measure of Mr. Xi have been astonished by how thoroughly he shook up the party’s top tiers.</p> <p>“He was dominant already and is even more dominant now,” said Dali Yang, a professor at the University of Chicago who researches Chinese politics. “He owns it.”</p> <p>Mr. Xi has stacked the Politburo Standing Committee, the party’s top body, with his loyalists. He has also appointed to the broader leadership a number of domestic security officials, military commanders, ideologues, engineers and technocrats, underscoring his ambition of accelerating China’s rise as a military and technological superpower — while keeping it under unyielding Communist Party control.</p>

For the world, this may portend a China newly energized to pursue Mr. Xi's agenda. Beijing is likely to remain defiant in the face of international criticism of its hard-line behavior. It is seeking greater self-sufficiency in strategic technologies. It wants to become the pre-eminent military force in the region and to strongly assert its claim over Taiwan. At the congress, Mr. Xi also said that China would promote its own initiatives to solve global development and security problems.

To the party's supporters and many people in China, Mr. Xi's centralized control can be a strength. The party has [pushed](#) images showing how the pandemic devastated other countries. Mr. Xi has contrasted the vast mobilizing capacity of the Chinese state with what he calls the "chaos of the West."

"A third term for Xi Jinping very much represents continuity in all of China's current policies, unlike the United States' flip-flopping policies," [Wang Wen](#), the executive dean of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies in Beijing, said in written responses to questions. "If Xi didn't get a third term, wouldn't the world be even more worried?"

Mr. Xi made clear that he was deeply involved in choosing the new cohort of officials. A top criterion for selection was loyalty to Mr. Xi, [said an official account](#) of the selection process that was published over the weekend. Rising officials, it said, must stay in lock step with him "in thinking, politics and action."

But investing so much power in Mr. Xi is a profound gamble. History is replete with examples of autocrats blinded by hubris and overreach after they surrounded themselves with subordinates afraid to report bad news.

Mr. Xi's decade in power has already produced examples of overstepping or disastrous foot-dragging, notably in early 2020 when local authorities initially tried to conceal evidence that Covid, then little understood, was infectious. Some scholars argue that such risks will grow now that he has cleared the Politburo of potential mavericks.

"That kind of pressure on people is really going to result in poor implementation of policy, at a minimum," said Susan Shirk, a former deputy assistant secretary of state during the Clinton administration and author of a new book, ["Overreach: How China Derailed Its Peaceful Rise."](#)

"People won't dare tell him the actual downsides and costs of his policies and the problems they're creating," she said. "Everyone is going to be competing among themselves to show how loyal they are, and they'll end up overdoing it."

Even China's censorship apparatus seemed to betray some sensitivity about the public's response to Mr. Xi's power. State accounts on social media turned off their comment sections or showed only upbeat reactions to the news of his new term. A few dissenting views briefly evaded the censors, some using veiled language to lament Mr. Xi's omnipresence, others asking why Hu Chunhua, once seen as a potential successor to Premier Li Keqiang, had been shunted off the leadership team.

"From his qualifications and performance, he should have been promoted!" one commenter wrote. "If ability isn't what counts, how can we revitalize?"

Having dispensed with potential counterweights in the party's top echelon, however, Mr. Xi may find that his biggest hazard becomes his own power, and the fact that responsibility for problems will rest even more clearly with him.

"Xi now truly owns the system, but any mistakes will also be his — unmistakably," said Professor Yang from the University of Chicago. "Until now, if there were some problems in the economy, he could blame it on others."

Mr. Xi began his march toward the party congress more than a year ago, exuding confidence that China had stifled Covid, allowing the country's economic growth to surge ahead of Western competitors'. But

even as the Communist Party lauded Mr. Xi, making the case for another term in power, the economy suffered a series of setbacks that at least partly reflected his miscalculations.

A two-month Covid-19 lockdown earlier this year paralyzed businesses in Shanghai and disrupted global supply chains. Economic growth in China from April through June was actually slower than in the United States.

Mr. Xi's push for ever greater Communist Party control over life in China has played a role in the economic troubles. The housing market is in a slump after Mr. Xi sought to curb property speculation, which he has concluded is undermining long-term healthy growth, prompting dozens of real estate developers to default on their debts.

His exceptionally stringent approach of imposing mass lockdowns and quarantines to eradicate Covid-19 outbreaks has throttled consumer spending on everything from cheap eateries to high-end jewelry.

Entrepreneurs [have fled the country](#), fearing regulatory crackdowns and the possibility of higher taxes as part of Mr. Xi's egalitarian pledges to deliver "common prosperity." He has imposed extensive restrictions on the tech and online education sectors, contributing to widespread unemployment among Chinese under the age of 25.

Mr. Xi's team already has a history of overreach on economic policy. In 2017, energy officials forced schools and apartment buildings in northeast China to rip out coal-fired boilers as part of a national campaign to reduce air pollution. But the natural gas heating systems that were to replace them were not yet ready, forcing [children to endure classes in freezing temperatures](#).

Given Mr. Xi's emphasis on national security and social stability, few experts expect China to return to the freewheeling business climate that accompanied rapid economic growth before he took office. On the contrary, Mr. Xi talked far more about Marxism than markets in his opening speech at the party congress.

Faced with the threat of crippling [economic sanctions](#) by the United States and its allies, Mr. Xi has carefully cultivated a new crop of technocrats — scientists and engineers in fields like defense and space exploration — to carry out his broader goals, such as efforts to manufacture semiconductors and commercial aircraft.

Top-level promotions included those of two former leaders of China's space program, an ex-executive of one of China's largest defense contractors and the former head of China's nuclear safety agency. Their rise in a time of intensified strategic competition is no accident, said Joel Andreas, a sociology professor at Johns Hopkins University and author of "Rise of the Red Engineers."

"They've got to build up their own key industries including chips and aerospace," he said, "especially because they're no longer on friendly terms with the United States."

Among Mr. Xi's appointees is Li Qiang, the party secretary of Shanghai, who may be China's next premier. Mr. Li has also worked at the top level in two provinces that are pillars of the national economy, Zhejiang and Jiangsu. Mr. Li's image was tainted by the harsh lockdown in Shanghai earlier this year, but he has a reputation for competence, said Professor Yang from the University of Chicago.

Still, even the most qualified or confident officials may eventually quake at the idea of challenging Mr. Xi's policies. The appointment of a Standing Committee so thoroughly populated with loyalists sends a strong signal that conformity is a road to success.

One of the new entrants into the top body was Cai Qi, a longtime associate of Mr. Xi who was the party secretary of Beijing. In the capital, Mr. Cai is known for [starting a divisive drive](#) in 2017 to demolish cheap housing on the edges of the city.

	<p>The ostensible reason for doing so was that the buildings were unlicensed and unsafe, but the campaign also served Mr. Xi's demand to hold down the population of Beijing. Soon enough, the abrupt departure of tens of thousands of migrant workers created serious problems for businesses that employed them as couriers, cleaners and builders.</p> <p>The bulldozing epitomized the risks that have now grown for China: men who answer to the top at the expense of the citizens below. (The 24-member Politburo no longer has women either for the first time in 25 years.)</p> <p>"Xi is surrounded by yes-men," said Jean-Pierre Cabestan, a professor emeritus at Hong Kong Baptist University, "and there are not even any yes-women."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/23 Ukraine pioneers art of anti-drone warfare</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/world/europe/ukraine-russia-drones-iran.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/world/europe/ukraine-russia-drones-iran.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Directed by ground controllers tracking a drone on radar, a Ukrainian fighter jet pilot, code-named Juice, streaked through the sky in pursuit, hoping to sneak up behind the slow-moving Iranian-made craft and take it down with a missile.</p> <p>But on this day, as on many others, Juice found nothing.</p> <p>Shooting down noisy, propeller-driven Iranian-made drones is a frustrating business and harder than it might seem. It takes multiple actors on the ground and in the air working closely together for 24 hours a day.</p> <p>"The last few weeks were very busy, very exhausting for us," Juice said of the air war against the drones, dozens of which Russia has deployed daily. "It's still very, very difficult to shoot them down."</p> <p>The war in Ukraine is now fought in two mostly separate arenas: on the ground in the south and east, where the Ukrainian Army has the upper hand, and in the air, where Russia is firing long-range missiles and deploying the exploding Iranian-made drones to cripple the electrical and heating infrastructure in Ukrainian cities in the hopes of demoralizing the population.</p> <p>Since Russia began terrorizing Ukrainian cities in September with the drones, Ukraine has turned its focus to an intense counter-drone strategy, made up on the fly but often surprisingly successful.</p> <p>Currently, it consists of three layers of protection: fighter jets that patrol around the clock; ground-fired antiaircraft missiles; and teams of soldiers with machine guns who try to shoot the drones down as they fly past.</p> <p>The hardest part is simply finding the drones, Juice said. On radar, the small, plodding drones can be confused with migrating birds or trucks on a highway. Ground controllers identify potential targets and direct jets to intercept them, but often the pilots come up empty.</p> <p>Despite the hurdles, the Ukrainian military is now routinely shooting down more than 70 percent of the Shahed-136 drones Russia purchased from Iran in August, Yuriy Sak, an adviser to the Ukrainian minister of defense, said in an interview.</p> <p>Ukraine shot down the first such drone in the country's east on Sept. 13 and has since downed at least 237, the Ukrainian military said in a statement last week. "We are trying to quickly adapt to the new reality," Mr. Sak said.</p> <p>Exploding drones are a rapidly emerging class of weapons that are proliferating around the world and likely to become a staple of modern armed conflicts, military analysts say. That is a point that Ukrainian officials have been making in seeking air defense assistance from their allies. If Ukraine can learn to shoot</p>

the drones down with its three-pronged effort, allied countries' militaries could reap the benefits of this hard-won experience, Mr. Sak said.

There have been notable successes.

One Ukrainian MiG pilot won folk hero status in Ukraine this month for shooting down five Iranian Shahed-136 drones over the central Ukrainian city of Vinnytsia, only to be forced to eject after crashing into the debris of the last one. The pilot, Karaya — who identified himself by only his nickname, according to military policy — told the local news media afterward, “Within a short period of time, we are adapting to this kind of weapon and are starting to destroy it successfully.”

After colliding with the airborne debris, he said, Karaya steered his MiG away from Vinnytsia and ejected. The jet crashed into houses in an outlying area, but injured nobody on the ground. Karaya later visited the site to apologize.

“I visited the scene, said I was sorry for the discomfort I caused the residents and thanked them for their steel nerves,” he wrote on Instagram, saying he showed up in his tattered uniform, missing epaulets. He joked that it was a violation of military protocol. “Lost them while leaving the office,” he wrote.

While fighter jets have been effective against Iranian drones, said Yurii Ignat, a Ukrainian Air Force spokesman, the approach is costly because of its use of air-to-air missiles. “It’s frustrating that we must hit these drones with expensive missiles,” he said. “What else can we do? This is the reality now.”

Before Russia’s arsenal included the Iranian-made drones, beginning in August, Ukraine had an edge in drone warfare.

Ukrainian soldiers along the front line flew off-the-shelf commercial drones to spot targets and drop grenades on Russian trenches. The United States has supplied Ukraine with its Switchblade drones, a type of exploding drone. Ukraine has also deployed Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones — larger, longer-range craft that surveil the battlefield and fire guided missiles.

In August, the United States promised that within the next nine months it would deliver to Ukraine a small, compact counter-drone missile system that could be mounted on the back of an ordinary pickup truck. The so-called Vampire system is a newly developed anti-drone technology that can reach out farther than a machine gun, but is portable enough to be driven quickly into the path of incoming drones.

After a drone swarm attack on Kyiv on Monday, Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, appealed to Israel for air defense weapons. The plea was rebuffed by Israel’s minister of defense, Benny Gantz, largely because Israel depends on Russian cooperation for the Israeli Air Force to conduct raids in Syria. Israel, he said, would provide early warning systems, but not air defense weapons.

Mr. Sak, the adviser to the Ukrainian defense minister, said Israel could be missing an opportunity to hone its tactics in facing down threats in its own territory by assisting in the counter-drone efforts now underway in Ukraine.

“These Iranian drones that are hitting Ukrainian cities were not developed, not meant for Ukraine,” Mr. Sak said. “They were developed as a mass capability to strike Israel. They are using Ukraine as a testing ground, to see weaknesses, to perfect them, and sooner or later they will use them against Israel.”

A Ukrainian official, speaking off the record, has said Israel has provided intelligence useful for targeting the Iranian drones.

The drones, when in flight, also have a distinctive buzz from their small engines, which has proved a vulnerability.

	<p>In Kyiv, three policemen shot down one drone with their Kalashnikov rifles after hearing the buzz, described by witnesses as sounding like a chain-saw engine, and then seeing the triangular weapon fly toward them over rooftops.</p> <p>“There was very little time to make a decision,” said Sgt. Oleksandr Kravchuk, who is a shooting instructor with the police department.</p> <p>He said he fired all 30 rounds in his magazine, trying to aim in front of the craft to account for its speed in flight. The drone veered off course and crashed, blowing up about 75 yards from where he was standing, Sergeant Kravchuk said in an interview.</p> <p>“We heard it, we saw it, then we opened fire,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/24 Pandemic: math, reading scores decline</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/24/us/math-reading-scores-pandemic.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/24/us/math-reading-scores-pandemic.html</a>
GIST	<p>U.S. students in most states and across almost all demographic groups have experienced troubling setbacks in both math and reading, according to an authoritative national exam released on Monday, offering the most definitive indictment yet of the pandemic’s impact on millions of schoolchildren.</p> <p>In math, the results were especially devastating, representing the steepest declines ever recorded on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the nation’s report card, which tests a broad sampling of fourth and eighth graders and dates to the early 1990s.</p> <p>In the test’s first results since the pandemic began, math scores for eighth graders fell in nearly every state. A meager 26 percent of eighth graders were proficient, down from 34 percent in 2019.</p> <p>Fourth graders fared only slightly better, with declines in 41 states. Just 36 percent of fourth graders were proficient in math, down from 41 percent.</p> <p>Reading scores also declined in more than half the states, continuing <a href="#">a downward trend</a> that had begun even before the pandemic. No state showed sizable improvement in reading. And only about one in three students met proficiency standards, a designation that means students have demonstrated competency and are on track for future success.</p> <p>And for the country’s most vulnerable students, the pandemic has left them even further behind. The drops in their test scores were often more pronounced, and their climbs to proficiency are now that much more daunting.</p> <p>“I want to be very clear: The results in today’s nation’s report card are appalling and unacceptable,” said Miguel Cardona, the secretary of education. “This is a moment of truth for education. How we respond to this will determine not only our recovery, but our nation’s standing in the world.”</p> <p>The exam, which is administered by federal officials and is considered more rigorous than many state tests, sampled nearly 450,000 fourth and eighth graders in more than 10,000 schools between January and March. The results are detailed for each state, as well as more than two dozen large school districts.</p> <p>The findings raise significant questions about where the country goes from here. Last year, the federal government made its largest single investment in American schools — \$123 billion, or about \$2,400 per student — to help students catch up. School districts were required to spend at least 20 percent of the money on academic recovery, a threshold some experts believe is inadequate for the magnitude of the problem.</p> <p>With the funding slated to expire in 2024, research suggests that it could take <a href="#">billions more dollars</a> and <a href="#">several years</a> for students to properly recover.</p>



The test results could be seized as political fodder — just before the midterms — to re-litigate the debate over how long schools should have stayed closed, an issue that galvanized many parents and teachers.

The bleak results underscored how closing schools hurt students, but researchers cautioned against drawing fast conclusions about whether states where schools stayed remote for longer had significantly worse results.

Decisions about how long to keep schools closed often varied even within states, depending on the local school district and virus transmission rates. And other factors, such as poverty levels and a state's specific education policies, may also influence results.

The picture was mixed, and performance varied by grade level and subject matter in ways that were not always clear cut.

For example, Texas, where many schools opened sooner, held steady in reading but posted declines similar to national averages in math.

In California, which stood out for its caution in reopening schools, scores declined slightly less than national averages in several categories — about in line with Florida, which was a leader in opening schools sooner. Los Angeles stayed closed longer than almost anywhere else in the country, according to data by Burbio, a school tracking site, yet it was the only place to show significant gains in eighth-grade reading.

“Comparing states is tricky and people will likely go to red state, blue state, which is not the most helpful framing,” said Sean Reardon, a professor of education at Stanford University who is conducting a deeper analysis to try to come to more definitive answers.

### **The Math Problem**

Students today are still performing better than they did 30 years ago in math. For the last decade, math scores had held steady, with small fluctuations here and there.

But this year, that stability was shattered.

In eighth-grade math, the average score fell in all but one state. Seventeen states and the District of Columbia experienced double-digit drops, including higher-performing states like Massachusetts and New Jersey, and lower-performing states like Oklahoma and New Mexico. Utah was the only state where the eighth-grade math declines were not deemed statistically significant.

Places like Delaware, Maryland and Washington, D.C., fell by double digits in both fourth- and eighth-grade math.

The scores for older students were particularly concerning because “eighth grade is that gateway to more advanced mathematical course taking,” said Peggy Carr, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, the research arm of the Department of Education, which administers the exam. She said students may be missing foundational skills in algebra and geometry, which would be needed in high school and for future careers in math and science.

For example, compared with 2019, fewer eighth graders could measure the length of a diagonal of a rectangle, or convert miles to yards.

Reading was less affected, perhaps, in part, because students received more help from parents during the pandemic.

Matthew Chingos, who directs the Center on Education Data and Policy at the Urban Institute, a research group, said the national results are consistent with other data that suggests math scores, in general, tend to

be more dependent on what is being taught in school, whereas reading scores can also be driven by “what happens in the home.”

Still, reading was not spared, and in both grades, more than half the states saw significant declines. In 2019, [reading scores had also declined](#) in many states.

### **A Sharp Drop, a Wider Gap**

The pandemic laid bare the deep and troubling inequalities that dominate many aspects of American life — especially in education.

In fourth grade, for both math and reading, students in the bottom 25th percentile lost more ground compared with students at the top of their class, leaving the low-performing students further behind.

And Black and Hispanic students, who started out behind white and Asian peers, experienced sharper declines than those groups in fourth-grade math.

Black and Hispanic students are more likely to attend schools segregated in poverty, and those schools [stayed remote for longer](#) than wealthier schools did during the pandemic, deepening divides.

The impact was especially stark for struggling students. In a survey included in the test, only half of fourth graders who were low performing in math said they had access to a computer at all times during the 2020-21 school year, compared with 80 percent of high-performing students.

Similarly, 70 percent said they had a quiet place to work at least some of the time, compared with 90 percent for high performers.

In one bright spot, most big city school districts, including New York City, Dallas and Miami-Dade, held steady in reading.

Raymond Hart, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, which works with 77 of the nation’s largest urban public school districts, saw it as a hopeful sign that the remedies districts put in place may be making a difference. “We believe recovery and rebound is possible for students,” he said.

But students in some districts like Cleveland and Memphis could afford to lose little ground. Many experience deep poverty and were already struggling entering the pandemic, yet they showed large declines this year across both grade levels and subjects.

In Detroit, where nearly one in two schoolchildren live in poverty, just 6 percent of fourth graders were proficient in math in 2019. This year, that number fell to 3 percent.

### **Now What?**

Test scores are not the only factors that matter for a child’s future, but research has documented the importance of academic preparedness, starting early.

Students who do not read well in elementary school [are more likely to drop out of high school, or not graduate on time](#). And [ninth grade](#) — where eighth graders who took the test in the spring are now — is considered a critical year for setting students up to graduate high school and attend college.

“We need to be doing something to target our resources better at those students who have been just historically underserved,” said Denise Forte, the interim chief executive at the Education Trust, which focuses on closing gaps for disadvantaged students.

Much of the nation’s hope for recovery rests on the billions of dollars in pandemic aid. But districts were given wide latitude for spending the money.

	<p>“Many districts do not have a concerted plan for math,” said Marguerite Roza, the director of the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University, who is tracking pandemic relief spending. She is among those who believe that districts will need to spend more than 20 percent of their relief money on academic recovery.</p> <p>One option, research suggests, is simply more time. <a href="#">Frequent small-group tutoring</a> and <a href="#">doubling up on math classes</a> are among the strategies that have shown promise.</p> <p>Kevin Huffman, a former education commissioner in Tennessee who is now the chief executive of Accelerate, a nonprofit focused on tutoring, urged leaders to set aside finger pointing about what went wrong during the pandemic, and instead make a “moral commitment” to helping students recover.</p> <p>“We cannot, as a country, declare that 2019 was the pinnacle of American education,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Multiple records for chaotic year at border</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/22/joe-biden-sets-new-record-terrorism-suspects-borde/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/22/joe-biden-sets-new-record-terrorism-suspects-borde/</a>
GIST	<p>The Border Patrol apprehended a record 20 terrorism suspects in September, bringing the total for fiscal 2022 to nearly 100 and closing out the most chaotic 12-month period in border history.</p> <p>On all the major yardsticks — illegal entries, gang members, convicted criminals, fentanyl and suspected terrorists — the situation got dramatically worse over the past year as smuggling cartels took advantage of the Biden administration’s more relaxed approach to the southern border.</p> <p>All told, Customs and Border Protection reported nearly 2.4 million encounters with unauthorized migrants at the southern border in fiscal 2022, which ended last month. Of those, 2.2 million were caught by Border Patrol agents as they tried to sneak in, and the rest were encountered at ports of entry demanding to be let in without authorization.</p> <p>Each of those numbers is believed to be a record, and they left Republicans seething — not least because the Department of Homeland Security released the numbers just before midnight Friday, in what critics said was a futile attempt to bury bad political news.</p> <p>“You’ve got to be kidding,” the Republicans on the House Homeland Security Committee said in a statement.</p> <p>In September alone, CBP encountered 227,547 illegal immigrants at the southern border. That was the third-highest month on record, topped only by April and May of this year.</p> <p>Among them were 20 terrorism suspects nabbed by the Border Patrol as they tried to sneak in along the southern border. That’s a monthly record, topping the previous high of 15 set in May.</p> <p>It brought the total for fiscal 2022 to 98, shattering previous highs.</p> <p>In 2021, the Border Patrol nabbed 15. From 2017 to 2020, during the Trump years, the Border Patrol nabbed a total of just 11 terrorism suspects entering from Mexico.</p> <p>Experts say the terrorism numbers, like fentanyl seizures and overall illegal crossings, are leading indicators of the chaos at the southern border: When more are caught, it means even more are likely getting through.</p> <p>Border Patrol agents say terrorism suspects in particular were dumb enough to get caught or didn’t know they were on the watch list. Those who did know and were trying to sneak into the U.S. were doing so amid the chaos.</p>

Last year brought a chilling reminder of that. A man prosecutors connected to the Islamic State group was charged with trying to sneak a hit squad into the U.S. in a plot to assassinate former President George W. Bush. According to an informant, the man bragged that he had already smuggled in two Hezbollah figures and charged them \$50,000 each.

CBP reported seizing 14,700 pounds of fentanyl, the deadly synthetic opioid that has sent overdose death rates soaring. That's up from 11,200 pounds the previous year and 4,800 pounds in 2020, the final year under President Trump.

The Border Patrol said it caught 751 known or suspected gang members over the past year — more than in 2020 and 2021 combined. More than 300 of those were tied to MS-13, the brutally violent gang that stretches from Central America to the U.S.

The Border Patrol also nabbed 12,028 convicted criminal migrants over the past year, up from 10,763 in 2021 and 2,438 in 2020.

Like the terrorist suspect numbers, agents say, when more are caught, more are getting through.

The 2022 numbers come on top of 1.7 million illegal immigrants CBP encountered in 2021, challenging the Biden administration's insistence that the border is secure.

"No, the border is not secure," Rep. Henry Cuellar, Texas Democrat, told "Fox News Sunday." "When you had 1.7 million individuals last year, and now another 2.7 [million], that's over 4.5 million individuals encountered at the border. Plus, if you add the getaways, that's going to be over 5 million individuals in just two years."

The fiscal year ran from Oct. 1, 2021, to Sept. 30, 2022.

CBP didn't report how many of the 2.4 million total illegal immigrants it encountered were released into the country, but based on partial data the agency submitted in a court case earlier this year, it is hundreds of thousands and could reach 1 million.

That's in addition to estimates of roughly 600,000 "gotaways" — migrants Border Patrol agents detected coming across but weren't able to catch.

Immigration analysts said the U.S. enforcement system was designed to stop Mexicans. In recent years, it has struggled to handle the flow from Central America. Now, it is completely unprepared to adjust to the surging numbers from farther afield, with Venezuelans now constituting the most acute challenge.

Just five years ago, Mexico and northern Central American nations accounted for 96% of unauthorized border crossers, the Migration Policy Institute said. In fiscal 2022, they made up 57% of the crossers.

The Venezuelan surge has forced the Biden administration to adopt the get-tough approach that the Trump administration used. President Biden tore it down when he took office.

Under a program announced this month, Homeland Security has opened a pathway to temporary status for 24,000 Venezuelans who go through a pre-check. The department said it would shove others back across the border into Mexico.

The first of the 24,000 arrived over the weekend.

CBP said the program is already paying off, with a severe drop in Venezuelans jumping the border.

"While this early data is not reflected in the latest report, it confirms what we've said all along: When there is a lawful and orderly way to enter the country, individuals will be less likely to put their lives in the hands of smugglers and try to cross the border unlawfully," said CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus.

	<p>Homeland Security has said it will consider expanding the program if it works.</p> <p>That would earn a new round of withering criticism from immigrant rights groups that say the Biden administration should open its arms wider, not shut down pathways illegal immigrants take.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/24 Uganda reports worrisome rise Ebola cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uganda-reports-worrisome-increase-ebola-cases-capital-91989206">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/uganda-reports-worrisome-increase-ebola-cases-capital-91989206</a>
GIST	<p>KAMPALA, Uganda -- Ugandan officials have reported 11 more cases of Ebola in the capital since Friday, a worrisome increase in infections just over a month after an outbreak was declared in a remote part of the East African country.</p> <p>Nine more people in the Kampala metropolitan area tested positive for Ebola on Sunday, in addition to two others on Friday, Health Minister Jane Ruth Aceng said Monday.</p> <p>A top World Health Organization official in Africa said last week that Uganda's Ebola outbreak was "rapidly evolving," describing a challenging situation for health workers.</p> <p>Ugandan health authorities have confirmed 75 cases of Ebola since Sept. 20, including 28 deaths. There are 19 active cases.</p> <p>The official numbers don't include those who probably died of Ebola before the outbreak was confirmed in a farming community about 150 kilometers (93 miles) west of Kampala.</p> <p>Fears that Ebola could spread far from the outbreak's epicenter compelled authorities to impose an ongoing lockdown, including nighttime curfews, on two of the five districts reporting Ebola cases. The measures were put in place after a man infected with Ebola sought treatment in Kampala and died in a hospital there.</p> <p>The nine new cases reported Monday follow a similar pattern as they all are contacts of an Ebola-infected patient who traveled from an Ebola hotspot and sought treatment at Kampala's top public hospital, known as Mulago.</p> <p>There is no proven vaccine for the Sudan strain of Ebola that's circulating in Uganda.</p> <p>Ugandan officials by Thursday had documented more than 1,800 Ebola contacts, 747 of whom had completed 21 days of monitoring for possible signs of the disease that manifests as a viral hemorrhagic fever, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Tracing contacts is key to stemming the spread of contagious diseases like Ebola.</p> <p>Ebola is spread by contact with bodily fluids of an infected person or contaminated materials. Symptoms include fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain and, at times, internal and external bleeding.</p> <p>Scientists don't know the natural reservoir of Ebola, but they suspect the first person infected in an outbreak acquired the virus through contact with an infected animal or eating its raw meat. Ugandan officials are still investigating the source of the current outbreak.</p> <p>Uganda has had multiple Ebola outbreaks, including one in 2000 that killed more than 200 people. The 2014-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa killed more than 11,000 people, the disease's largest death toll.</p> <p>Ebola was discovered in 1976 in two simultaneous outbreaks in South Sudan and Congo, where it occurred in a village near the Ebola River, after which the disease is named.</p>

HEADLINE	10/22 Newer subvariants ticking up in California
SOURCE	<a href="https://news.yahoo.com/newer-coronavirus-subvariants-ticking-california-120005574.html">https://news.yahoo.com/newer-coronavirus-subvariants-ticking-california-120005574.html</a>
GIST	<p>Amid concerns about a potential winter COVID-19 wave, cases linked to newer coronavirus subvariants are starting to creep up in California as officials in both Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area warn that a lengthy decline in new infections appears to be stalling.</p> <p>Whether this trend in coronavirus cases can be blamed on the rise of the newer strains is unclear — especially since the Omicron subvariant BA.5 remains the dominant version nationwide, as <a href="#">has been the case</a> for months.</p> <p>But officials have long warned that any <a href="#">new subvariant could imperil</a> the progress against COVID-19, either by being inherently more infectious or better able to evade protection from vaccinations or previous infections.</p> <p>The latest generation of alphanumerically designated Omicron subvariants may have such an advantage, even over the <a href="#">hyper-infectious BA.5</a>.</p> <p>BA.5 "appears to be gradually accounting for fewer sequenced specimens, indicating that other variants could become more dominant in the future," according to Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer.</p> <p>The erosion of BA.5's dominance has been slow but steady. Such changes "could indicate the beginning of a growth advantage by some of the other strains," Ferrer said Thursday during a weekly briefing.</p> <p>According to the <a href="#">latest data</a> from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BA.5 accounts for an estimated 62% of all new coronavirus cases nationwide. However, that share has fallen markedly from mid-August, when it was thought to be behind more than 86% of cases.</p> <p>In the southwestern U.S., which includes California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific territories, BA.5 remains more common, accounting for an estimated 72% of all new cases during the latest analysis period.</p> <p>A few other Omicron <a href="#">subvariants also have risen</a> in prominence. <a href="#">BQ.1.1</a>, which some officials have pointed to as a potentially problematic strain, went from an estimated 0.2% of cases nationwide in mid-September to 7.2% this month. During that same time, BQ.1 has swelled its estimated share from 0.5% to 9.4%, while BF.7 — also known as BA.5.2.1.7 — has increased from 1.9% to 6.7%.</p> <p>In L.A. County, data from the week ending Oct. 1 also point to a decline in BA.5's dominance and <a href="#">new subvariants</a> making up an increasing share of cases.</p> <p>But while BQ.1 and BQ.1.1, both descendants of BA.5, are gaining ground nationwide, only a handful of such cases have been documented in L.A. County. Seven have been attributed to BQ.1 and three to BQ.1.1.</p> <p>Another Omicron subvariant, BA.2.75.2, represents only 0.2% of cases per week in L.A. County, a rate that has been stable for three weeks. L.A. County also has not reported any cases of the <a href="#">XBB subvariant</a> that has been spreading in Singapore, according to Ferrer.</p> <p>Some researchers in China have found evidence that XBB "can evade antibody protections developed after BA.5 infection. We don't yet know the full implications of this," Ferrer said.</p> <p>"Some of these mutations make it easier to evade prior immunity, meaning that many of us can be reinfected even if we were previously infected with a strain of Omicron earlier this year," she added. "And</p>



while there's no immediate risk given the relatively low numbers of recently sequenced specimens of these new sublineages in L.A. County, we do need to be vigilant."

While newer strains have some mutations that could provide a growth advantage, it's unclear whether any will cause more severe symptoms than their predecessors.

And many officials and experts remain generally optimistic that available vaccines — particularly the recent released [bivalent boosters](#) — should continue to provide strong protection against the latest round of subvariants.

"We understand that there may be COVID fatigue, but we cannot let our guard down," the California Department of Public Health wrote in a recent statement to The Times. "Our statewide COVID-19 vaccination campaign is still working with community partners across the state to emphasize the importance of staying up-to-date on their COVID-19 vaccines and boosters."

The [updated boosters](#) are designed to target the original version of the coronavirus — incorporating the same formula as the vaccines available since late 2020 — and the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants. Many of the newer strains are descendants of those subvariants.

"Do I worry about the alphabet soup of new variants of concern, today's biggies: BQ.1 & XBB? Sure, but there's nothing we can do about them other than watch their prevalence; get boosted — even if they're partly immune evasive, you'll be better protected with the boost than not," Dr. Robert Wachter, chair of UC San Francisco's Department of Medicine, [wrote on Twitter](#) on Wednesday.

Wachter added that, at a societal level, he's "most worried about the low level of uptake of the new booster," which he said only about 5% of eligible Americans have received.

"That low uptake will translate into tens of millions of preventable cases, and thousands of preventable deaths — most of the latter in high-risk groups," Wachter [wrote](#).

California has made significant progress since the height of last summer's COVID wave, with cases and hospitalizations plunging in recent months. But those declines may be slowing.

[L.A. County reported](#) 874 coronavirus cases a day for the seven-day period that ended Friday, or 61 cases a week for every 100,000 residents. That represents an 8% decline from the prior week. By contrast, the prior week-over-week decline was 17%.

The San Francisco Bay Area reported 60 cases a week for every 100,000 residents for the seven-day period that ended Tuesday — no change from the prior week. The previous week-over-week decline was 15%.

In addition, "we're no longer seeing any substantial declines in [wastewater concentration](#), which may mean that viral transmission is no longer decreasing in L.A. County. We'll have to see," Ferrer said.

Her observations echoed those of Dr. Matt Willis, Marin County's health officer. Willis [warned](#) a week earlier that the rate at which lab-based coronavirus tests are coming back positive was starting to tick up, from 4.5% to 6.5%, in recent weeks.

"Since the start of the pandemic in Marin, every surge has been preceded by an increase in percent positivity," Willis said. "Also the previous downward trend in our wastewater has stalled. And we'll have to be following that closely."

Willis cautioned that [developments in Europe](#) and the eastern U.S. suggest pandemic trends are worsening. "In Europe, there's a clear surge in cases and hospitalizations. And we're seeing significant increases in virus levels in Massachusetts wastewater," he said.

But in those cases, Willis said the uptick isn't being fueled mostly by a recently emerged strain.

"It's important to note that these surges are being fueled by our regular BA.5 variant of Omicron, which means this: BA.5 can apparently surge, subside for a few months, and resurge again in the same communities," he said. "We really haven't seen that much before."

Previous COVID-19 surges have largely coincided with the emergence of a new coronavirus variant or subvariant. That BA.5 could apparently strike twice "means that waning immunity, changing weather and/or changing behaviors are the culprit," according to Willis.

"Whatever the reason, it's concerning for us because as a community, we look a lot like Massachusetts and those parts of Europe where surges are occurring," he said. "We're highly vaccinated, we're coming into colder weather and we're coming off a BA.5 surge a few months ago."

In addition, new subvariants circulating abroad could amplify an autumn wave, Willis said.

"BQ.1 is increasing in Europe and seems to be even more infectious than BA.5," he said. "The good news, if we can call it that, is that most of these newer variants that are circulating — and may hit here — are actually closely related to BA.5," so it was a good decision for federal officials to ask vaccine manufacturers to focus on an updated booster designed to protect against BA.5.

Ferrer said she thinks it's likely a new strain or subvariant will eventually start crowding out BA.5. But "how quickly that happens and how much of an impact that has on a [winter surge](#), I can't really estimate at this point," she said.

While newer subvariants have been slowly increasing, "that doesn't mean that you can't have a massive acceleration of spread if something is able to crowd out the rest of the variants that are in place — particularly as we get into the colder months; people are going to be inside more, people aren't wearing masks," Ferrer said.

The good news is that the updated Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna bivalent boosters are designed to protect against the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants, "and we expect that this will provide good protection against the BA.4 and BA.5 subvariant and the BQ strains."

On Wednesday, the CDC [allowed](#) the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine to also be used as a booster for adults. But that offering is designed against only the original coronavirus strain, not the BA.4 and BA.5 variants.

For most people, a recent infection really does boost the immune system, but that immunity can vary for each person. Overall, Ferrer suggests residents get boosted by the end of October or the start of November.

"I hope that as we get closer to the holidays and the colder weather and more gatherings, each of us can be sure we continue to do our part by staying home when sick; getting tested when exposed, ill or gathering indoors with others at elevated risk; and primarily taking advantage of the new boosters that protect against Omicron," she said.

Vaccines aren't the only option for warding off COVID-19. [A number of therapeutics](#) — including remdesivir and bebtelovimab, which are administered intravenously, and Paxlovid and molnupiravir, which can be taken orally — can help stave off severe illness and death.

"Over 85,000 doses of oral therapeutics are available right now in L.A. County," Ferrer said. "We have no shortage."

The anti-COVID drugs aren't meant to be a substitute for vaccines. But infections can still happen, "and these medications are invaluable in our toolkit to fight severe outcomes," she added.

HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Federal tax collections set record</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnsnews.com/article/washington/terence-p-jeffrey/4896119000000-federal-tax-collections-set-record-fiscal-2022">https://www.cnsnews.com/article/washington/terence-p-jeffrey/4896119000000-federal-tax-collections-set-record-fiscal-2022</a>
GIST	<p>(CNSNews.com) - The federal government collected a record \$4,896,119,000,000 in total taxes in fiscal 2022 (October 2021 through September 2022), <a href="#">according to the Monthly Treasury Statement released today</a>.</p> <p>That was up \$518,302,170,000—or 11.8 percent—from the previous record of \$4,377,816,830,000 (in constant September 2022 dollars) that the federal government collected in fiscal 2021.</p> <p>Fiscal 2015—when the federal government collected \$4,052,366,920,000 in total taxes (in constant September 2022 dollars)—ranks as the third highest year for total federal tax collections.</p> <p>The record \$4,896,119,000,000 in total taxes that the federal government collected in fiscal 2022 included \$2,632,145,000,000 in individual income taxes; \$1,483,526,000,000 in social insurance and retirement taxes; \$99,908,000,000 in customs duties; \$87,726,000,000 in excise taxes; \$32,550,000,000 in estate and gift taxes; and \$135,397,000,000 in what the Treasury calls “miscellaneous receipts.”</p> <p>While collecting a record \$4,896,119,000,000 in total taxes, the federal government was also spending a total of \$6,271,508,000,000—resulting in a fiscal 2022 deficit of \$1,375,389,000,000.</p> <p>That was the fourth straight year that the federal government has run an annual deficit of more than a trillion dollars. In fact, when adjusted into constant September 2022 dollars, the federal deficit has exceeded a trillion dollars in eight of the last fourteen years.</p> <p>Federal spending hit a record high of \$7,471,371,670,000 (in constant September 2022 dollars) in fiscal 2020. In fiscal 2021, it dropped slightly to \$7,377,360,790,000 (in constant September 2022 dollars). Then in fiscal 2022, it dropped to \$6,271,508,000,000.</p> <p>Despite that decline, the last three fiscal years have seen the highest spending in the nation’s history and the only years when spending (in constant September 2022 dollars) has exceeded \$6 trillion.</p> <p>The Department of Health and Human Services led all federal departments in spending in fiscal 2022 with outlays of \$1,642,895,000,000. It was followed by the Social Security Administration, which spent \$1,282,056,000,000; and the Department of Defense and Military Programs, which spent \$726,571,000,000.</p> <p>The gross interest on Treasury securities in fiscal 2022 hit \$717,611,000,000 almost exceeding spending on Defense and Military Program, according to the Treasury statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Illegal southern border crossings hit high</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/biden-mexico-us-customs-and-border-protection-cuba-immigration-8fbba5bde9afca3f404eaa96bcfd136a">https://apnews.com/article/biden-mexico-us-customs-and-border-protection-cuba-immigration-8fbba5bde9afca3f404eaa96bcfd136a</a>
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO (AP) — A surge in migration from Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua in September brought the number of illegal crossings to the highest level ever recorded in a fiscal year, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.</p> <p>The year-end numbers reflect deteriorating economic and political conditions in some countries, the relative strength of the U.S. economy and uneven enforcement of Trump-era asylum restrictions.</p> <p>Migrants were stopped 227,547 times in September at the U.S. border with Mexico, the third-highest month of Joe Biden’s presidency. It was up 11.5% from 204,087 times in August and 18.5% from 192,001 times in September 2021.</p>

In the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, migrants were stopped 2.38 million times, up 37% from 1.73 million times the year before, [according to figures](#) released late Friday night. The annual total surpassed 2 million for the first time in August and is more than twice the highest level during Donald Trump's presidency in 2019.

Nearly 78,000 migrants from Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua were stopped in September, compared to about 58,000 from Mexico and three countries of northern Central America that have historically accounted for most of the flow.

The [remarkable geographic shift](#) is at least partly a result of Title 42, a public health rule that suspends rights to see asylum under U.S. and international law on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Due to strained diplomatic relations, the U.S. cannot expel migrants to Venezuela, Cuba or Nicaragua. As a result, they are largely released in the United States to pursue their immigration cases.

Title 42 authority has been applied 2.4 million times since it began in March 2020 but has fallen disproportionately on migrants from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

U.S. officials say Venezuelan migration to the United States has plunged more than 85% since Oct. 12, when the U.S. began expelling Venezuelans to Mexico under Title 42. At the same time, the Biden administration pledged to admit up to 24,000 Venezuelans to the United States on humanitarian parole if they apply online with a financial sponsor and enter through an airport, similar to how tens of thousands of Ukrainians have come since Russia invaded their country.

The first four Venezuelans paroled into the United States arrived Saturday — two from Mexico, one from Guatemala, one from Peru — and hundreds more have been approved to fly, the Homeland Security Department said.

“While this early data is not reflected in the (September) report, it confirms what we’ve said all along: When there is a lawful and orderly way to enter the country, individuals will be less likely to put their lives in the hands of smugglers and try to cross the border unlawfully,” said CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus.

The expansion of Title 42 for Venezuelans to be expelled to Mexico came despite the administration's attempt to end the public health authority in May, which was blocked by a federal judge.

Venezuelans represented the [second-largest nationality](#) at the border after Mexicans for the second straight month, being stopped 33,804 times in September, up 33% from 25,361 times in August.

Cubans, who are participating in the [largest exodus](#) from the Caribbean island to the United States since 1980, were stopped 26,178 times at the border in September, up 37% from 19,060 in August.

Nicaraguans were stopped 18,199 times in September, up 55% from 7,298 times in August.

The report is the last monthly reading of migration flows before U.S. midterm elections, an issue that many Republicans have emphasized in campaigns to capture control of the House and Senate. Republicans on the House Homeland Security Committee released a one-sentence statement Saturday in response to the numbers: “You’ve got to be kidding.”

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HEADLINE	10/22 NYC: 2 monkeypox-linked deaths
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/2-deaths-in-new-york-city-linked-to-monkeypox-officials-say/3917779/">https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/2-deaths-in-new-york-city-linked-to-monkeypox-officials-say/3917779/</a>
GIST	New York City health officials announced two monkeypox-linked deaths on Friday, the first fatalities linked to the virus in the five boroughs, though few details on the individuals were immediately available.

	<p>According to the CDC, the United States has reported four monkeypox-linked deaths since the 2022 outbreak began, though the last data update was Thursday. The first fatality was reported in California in September.</p> <p>New York City officials didn't immediately release demographic or other information about the two residents who died, including whether they had underlying conditions, instead offering condolences in a brief statement.</p> <p>"We are deeply saddened by the two reported deaths and our hearts go out to the individuals' loved ones and community. Every effort will be made to prevent additional suffering from this virus through continued community engagement, information-sharing, and vaccination," the statement read.</p> <p>As of Oct. 17, the city has recorded at least 3,695 known cases of the virus. Since reaching its peak at the end of July, the outbreak of cases in New York City has dropped significantly, down to single-digit daily numbers by the beginning of this month.</p> <p>To date, more than 143,000 first and second doses of the monkeypox vaccine have been administered.</p> <p>"It appears that these deaths did occur in individuals who are either immunocompromised and have underlying health conditions," Dr. Purvi Parikh, of NYU Langone Health, told News 4.</p> <p>New Yorkers who received their first doses are strongly advised to get their second doses 28 days after their first. Walk-in appointments are available.</p> <p>Additionally, the city announced it will refer to monkeypox as MPV since the "previous name is an inaccurate and stigmatizing label for a virus that is primarily affecting a community that has already suffered a long history of bigotry."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/23 Russia warns of 'uncontrolled escalation'</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-10-23/russias-shoigu-warns-of-uncontrolled-escalation-in-ukraine-conflict">https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-10-23/russias-shoigu-warns-of-uncontrolled-escalation-in-ukraine-conflict</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>(Reuters) - Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told his French counterpart in a telephone call on Sunday that the situation in Ukraine was rapidly deteriorating and trending towards "uncontrolled escalation".</p> <p>In a phone call with French Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu published by the Russian side, Shoigu said Moscow had concerns Ukraine could use a "dirty bomb" in the conflict, without providing evidence to support the suggestion that Ukraine might use such a weapon.</p> <p>"They discussed the situation in Ukraine which is rapidly deteriorating," the defence ministry said in a readout of the call. "It is trending towards further uncontrolled escalation."</p> <p>A so-called dirty bomb uses conventional explosives laced with radioactive material.</p> <p>The defence ministry did not provide any further information on its statement.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/23 RSV infections run rampant across country</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/23/health/rsv-symptoms-treatments-wellness/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/23/health/rsv-symptoms-treatments-wellness/index.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	In September, an 8-month-old baby came into Dr. Juanita Mora's office in Chicago with an infection the doctor hadn't expected to see for another two months: <a href="#">RSV</a> .

Like her peers across the country, the allergist and immunologist has been treating little ones with this cold-like virus well before the season usually starts.

“We’re seeing RSV infections going rampant all throughout the country,” Mora said.

Almost all children catch RSV at some point before they turn 2, the US [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says](#). Most adults who catch it have a mild illness; for those who are elderly or who have chronic heart or lung disease or a weakened immune system, it can be [dangerous](#). But RSV can be especially tricky for infants and kids.

Mora, a volunteer medical spokesperson for the American Lung Association, says it’s important for parents, caregivers and daycare workers to know what to watch for with RSV, which stands for respiratory syncytial virus. That way, they know whether a sick child can be treated at home or needs to go to a hospital.

“The emergency department is getting completely flooded with all these sick kids, so we want parents to know they can go to their pediatrician and get tested for RSV, influenza and even Covid-19,” Mora said. Here’s what else parents need to know amid the surge of respiratory illnesses.

### **What to watch for**

For many, RSV causes a mild illness that can be managed at home.

On average, an infection lasts five days to a couple of weeks, and it will often go away on its own, [the CDC says](#). Sometimes, the cough can linger for up to four weeks, pediatricians say.

Symptoms may look like a common cold: a runny nose, a decreased appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever and wheezing. Young infants may seem only irritable or lethargic and have trouble breathing. Not every child will have every potential RSV symptom.

“Fever is really hit or miss with RSV infections, especially in young infants,” said Dr. Priya Soni, assistant professor of pediatric infectious diseases at Cedars Sinai Medical Center.

Parents should watch for any changes in behavior, she said, including taking longer to eat or not being interested in food at all. The child can also develop a severe cough and some wheezing.

It’s also important to watch for signs that your child is struggling to breathe or breathing with their ribs or belly – “symptoms which may kind of overlap with many of the other viruses that we’re seeing a resurgence of,” Soni added.

Since it’s not easy for parents to tell the difference between respiratory illnesses like, say, RSV and flu, it’s good to take a sick child to a pediatrician, who can run tests to pinpoint the cause.

“You may need to take your baby to be evaluated sooner rather than later,” Soni said.

When it comes to RSV, parents should be especially cautious if their children are preemies, newborns, children with weakened immune systems or neuromuscular disorders, and those under age 2 with chronic lung and heart conditions, the CDC says.

“Parents should be really astute to any changes, like in their activity and their appetite, and then pay particular attention to any signs of respiratory distress,” Soni said.

### **RSV treatment**

Testing is important because treatment for things like flu and Covid-19 may differ.

There’s no antiviral or specific treatment for RSV like there is for the flu, nor is there a vaccine. But if your child is sick, there are things you can do to help.



Fever and pain can be managed with non-aspirin pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Also make sure your child drinks enough fluids.

“RSV can make kids very dehydrated, especially when they’re not eating or drinking, especially when we’re talking infants,” Mora said. “Once they stop eating or their urine output has decreased, they’re not having as many wet diapers, this is a sign they may have to go to the pediatrician or emergency department.”

Talk to your pediatrician before giving your child any over-the-counter cold medicines, which can sometimes contain ingredients that aren’t good for kids.

### **When to go to the hospital**

Your pediatrician will check the child’s respiratory rate – how fast they’re breathing – and their oxygen levels. If your child is very sick or at high risk of severe illness, the doctor may want them to go to a hospital.

“RSV can be super dangerous for some young infants and younger kids, particularly those that are less than 2 years of age,” Soni said.

Mora said labored breathing is a sign that a child is having trouble with this virus. RSV can turn into more serious illnesses such as bronchiolitis or pneumonia, and that can lead to respiratory failure.

If you see that a child’s chest is moving up and down when they breathe, if their cough won’t let them sleep or if it’s getting worse, “that might be a sign that they need to seek help from their pediatrician or take them to the emergency department, because then they might need a supplemental oxygen, or they may need a nebulization treatment.”

CNN medical analyst Dr. Leana Wen says this respiratory difficulty – including a bobbing head, a flaring nose or grunting – is one of two major trouble signs with any respiratory infection. The other is dehydration. “That particularly applies to babies with stuffy noses. They may not be feeding.”

Much of the care provided by hospital staff will be to help with breathing.

“We provide supportive measures for RSV and these kids with oxygen, IV fluids and respiratory therapies, including suctioning,” Soni said.

A thin tube may need to be inserted into their lungs to remove mucus. A child can get extra oxygen through a mask or through a tube that attaches to their nose. Some children may need to use an oxygen tent. Those who are struggling a lot may need a ventilator.

Some babies might also need to be fed by tube.

### **How to prevent RSV**

The best ways to prevent RSV infections, doctors say, is to teach kids to cough and sneeze into a tissue or into their elbows rather than their hands. Also try to keep frequently touched surfaces clean.

If a caregiver or older sibling is sick, Mora says, they should wear a mask around other people and wash their hands frequently.

And most of all, if anyone is sick – child or adult – they should stay home so they don’t spread the illness.

There is a [monoclonal antibody treatment](#) for children who are at highest risk for severe disease. It’s not available for everyone, but it can protect those who are most vulnerable. It comes in the form of a shot that a child can get every month during the typical RSV season. Talk to your doctor about whether your child qualifies.

HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Post-coup, cracks in Sudan military junta</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/analysis-year-post-coup-cracks-sudans-military-junta-91949719">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/analysis-year-post-coup-cracks-sudans-military-junta-91949719</a>
GIST	<p>CAIRO -- On his return home from the U.N. General Assembly this year, Sudan's top general descended an airplane stairway in the country's capital to a flurry of cameras.</p> <p>Waiting to greet Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan with a smile and handshake was his deputy and paramilitary leader Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo. It was a choreographed moment between Sudan's most powerful men, a show of unity amid rumors of discord.</p> <p>A year after the two generals launched a military coup that upended the country's short-lived transition to democracy, their struggle for individual gain threatens to further destabilize the country.</p> <p>“While the fear of a civilian government brought Burhan and Hemedti together, there remain many divisions between them,” said Amjad Farid, a Sudan analyst and former aid to the country's prime minister deposed in the coup, Abdullah Hamdok. He used Dagalo's nickname, by which he is widely known.</p> <p>The coup, and disharmony between its leaders, has meant the future of Sudan's governance looks increasingly unsure. It has left a power vacuum that allowed the paramilitary force led by Dagalo, known as the Rapid Support Forces, to assume a growing role.</p> <p>As the respective leaders of Sudan's official army and largest paramilitary force, Burhan and Dagalo were meant to have overseen the democratic transition after former President Omar al-Bashir was toppled following three decades in power in a 2019 popular uprising.</p> <p>But on Oct. 25 last year, weeks before Burhan was supposed to step aside as head of the transitional council, he led a military coup, unseating the civilian half of Sudan's ruling Sovereignty Council. Dagalo backed him, his forces helping to detain dozens of civilian officials and politicians.</p> <p>In the aftermath, near-weekly pro-democracy marches were ruthlessly suppressed. There has also been a resurgence of deadly tribal clashes in the country's neglected peripheries in which hundreds of people were killed in recent months. The coup has plunged Sudan's already inflation-riddled economy into deeper peril. International aid has dried up and bread and fuel shortages, caused in part by the war in Ukraine, have become routine.</p> <p>Meanwhile, popular support for the military, the face of the coup, has dwindled. And in the absence of other options, the RSF, best known for its scorched-earth campaigns in the Darfur conflict, is seeking to portray itself as an alternative peacekeeper with deep pockets.</p> <p>“Most Sudanese now believe that the military lacks the credibility or solutions to bring security and prosperity to Sudan,” said Suliman Baldo, senior Sudan analyst and researcher with the Enough Project, a group that focuses on promoting good governance in African countries.</p> <p>Dagalo is trying to rectify the public image of his forces. Across social media, the group now presents itself as a mediator of tribal disputes and a participant in development projects, though many Sudanese continue to fear the group for its violent tactics. Its forces have been implicated in the killing of more than 100 protesters when they cleared a sit-in in June 2019 in the capital. An investigation into the deaths has since failed to reach any conclusions.</p> <p>Two Sudanese rights workers who track the paramilitary said the size of the RSF has doubled over the past three years to at least 100,000 fighters and that it has purchased high-tech weapons. The group does not publish official personnel figures. With these increased capabilities, the rights researchers say the</p>

paramilitary force has been able to cement its control over Sudan's porous western and northern borders, allowing it to profit from the smuggling of weapons, drugs and migrants as the military's reach contracted.

Both rights researchers spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. The researchers have followed the paramilitary for years and have obtained first-hand accounts from inside its ranks. Their estimates for the force's size match other analysts' approximations.

A spokesman for the RSF did not reply to a request for comment on the body's role in the transitional period and plans for the future.

There are also questions over the paramilitary group's sources of financing, in addition to the state funds it receives. The Center for Advanced Defense Studies, a think tank, said in a June report that the group has amassed wealth through gradual acquisition of Sudanese financial institutions and gold reserves, some under the names of Dagalo's relatives. RSF forces deployed to Yemen to fight on behalf of the Saudi-led coalition at war with the Houthi rebels, a move the force is likely to have been compensated for by at least one of the coalition's members, the United Arab Emirates.

Burhan and Dagalo are both stepping out on the international stage. They have separately conducted a series of independent diplomatic meetings, in Cairo, at the Kremlin and in Abu Dhabi, but maintain they have no interest in running in future elections.

Under immense international pressure, recent talks between the military and pro-democracy forces have made some progress. But that could be overturned at any minute, as Burhan and Dagalo maintain vague yet dominant roles.

Their separate pledges to facilitate democracy have lacked detail and often conflicted on key issues. Among the uncertainties is what powers these military leaders would retain under civilian rule, and whether the RSF will merge with Burhan's military, a key condition of a 2020 peace agreement meant to end decades of fighting in Darfur.

The beginning of the power struggle lies in al-Bashir's legacy. Both generals were heavily involved in his Darfur military campaigns that killed some 300,000 people during the 2000s, rights groups estimate. Unlike al-Bashir, the International Criminal Court has not indicted Burhan or Dagalo for committing war crimes in that conflict.

Burhan, a seasoned military veteran of the Sudanese Armed Forces, trained as an officer in Egypt. Dagalo, a former Darfuri camel trader, led the notorious janjaweed militias, spearheading devastating offensives against Darfur's African rebel groups in 2003. The janjaweed stand accused of mass rape and killing of civilians by the U.N. and rights groups. In an effort to contain and better utilize the fighting force, al-Bashir eventually recruited the janjaweed into the Rapid Support Forces in 2013, legitimizing them and instating Dagalo as an independent commander.

"The root cause of the current conflict between Hemedti and Burhan is the independence of RSF," said Farid, the former aid to Sudan's prime minister.

In recent months, in an effort to check the RSF's influence, Burhan has worked to reinstate his supporters, often Islamists who held positions under al-Bashir, in government. That's according to Baldo, the analyst, and Maher al Gokh, a former employee of Sudan's State Television who was detained in the coup but later released.

For now, a direct clash might be out of the question, because neither general can muster enough resources to rule alone.

"The survival of both groups depends on Hemedti and Burhan sticking it out together," said Baldo.

	Cameron Hudson, former chief of staff to the U.S. special envoy to Sudan and an associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the two generals are engaged in “a big zero-sum game.”
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Sudan: southern tribal clashes kill 220</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sudan-official-deaths-southern-tribal-clashes-220-91950250">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/sudan-official-deaths-southern-tribal-clashes-220-91950250</a>
GIST	<p>CAIRO -- Two days of tribal fighting in Sudan's south killed at least 220 people, a senior health official said Sunday, marking one the deadliest bouts of tribal violence in recent years. The unrest added to the woes of an African nation mired in civil conflict and political chaos.</p> <p>Fighting in Blue Nile province, which borders Ethiopia and South Sudan, reignited earlier this month over a land dispute. It pits the Hausa tribe, with origins across West Africa, against the Berta people.</p> <p>The tensions escalated Wednesday and Thursday in the town of Wad el-Mahi on the border with Ethiopia, according to Fath Arrahman Bakheit, the director general of the Health Ministry in Blue Nile.</p> <p>He told The Associated Press that officials counted at least 220 dead as of Saturday night, adding the tally could be much higher since medical teams were not able to reach the epicenter of the fighting.</p> <p>Bakheit said the first humanitarian and medical convoy managed to reach Was el-Mahi late Saturday to try to assess the situation, including counting “this huge number of bodies,” and the dozens of injured.</p> <p>“In such clashes, everyone loses,” he said. “We hope it ends soon and never happens again. But we need strong political, security and civil interventions to achieve that goal.”</p> <p>Footage from the scene, which corresponded to the AP's reporting, showed burned houses and charred bodies. Others showed women and children fleeing on foot.</p> <p>Many houses were burned down in the fighting, which displaced some 7,000 people to the city of Rusyaris. Others fled to neighboring provinces, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Overall, about 211,000 people have been displaced by tribal violence and other attacks across the country this year, it said.</p> <p>Authorities ordered a nighttime curfew in Wad el-Mahi and deployed troops to the area. They also established a fact-finding committee to investigate the clashes, according to the state-run SUNA news agency.</p> <p>The fighting between the two groups first erupted in mid-July, killing at least 149 people as of earlier October. It triggered violent protests and stoked tensions between the two tribes in Blue Nile and other provinces.</p> <p>The latest fighting comes at a critical time for Sudan, just a few days before the first anniversary of a military coup that further plunged the country into turmoil. The coup derailed the country’s short-lived transition to democracy after nearly three decades of the repressive rule of Omar al-Bashir, who was removed in April 2019 by a popular uprising.</p> <p>In recent weeks the military and the pro-democracy movement have engaged in talks to find a way out of the ongoing situation. The generals agreed to allow civilians to appoint a prime minister to lead the country through elections within 24 months, the pro-democracy movement said last week.</p> <p>However, the violence in Blue Nile is likely to slow down such efforts. Protest groups, who reject the deal with the ruling generals, have been preparing for mass anti-military demonstrations called for Tuesday, the anniversary of the coup.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/23 Russia pulls officers from Kherson?
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/military-tank-russia-withdraws-officers-kherson-91950112">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/military-tank-russia-withdraws-officers-kherson-91950112</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- Russia's military leadership has withdrawn its officers in the Russian-annexed city of Kherson across the Dnieper River in anticipation of an advance of Ukrainian troops, the Institute for the Study of War think tank said Sunday.</p> <p>To delay the Ukrainian counteroffensive as the Russians complete their retreat, Moscow has left newly mobilized, inexperienced forces on the other side of the wide river, it added.</p> <p>The troop movements come as the Ukrainian military said its forces have continued their counteroffensives in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.</p> <p>On Saturday, Russian-installed authorities in Ukraine told all Kherson residents to leave immediately ahead of the expected action by Ukrainian troops to take back the city. Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Russian-backed regional administration in Kherson, said Sunday that over 20,000 civilians had evacuated to the left bank of the Dnieper River.</p> <p>He said that while Ukrainian forces were trying to push their offensive on the right bank, Russian defensive lines "have been reinforced and the situation has remained stable."</p> <p>Kherson has been in Russian hands since the early days of the eight-month-long war in Ukraine. The city is the capital of a region of the same name, one of four that Russian President Vladimir Putin illegally annexed last month and put under Russian martial law on Thursday.</p> <p>On Friday, Ukrainian forces bombarded Russian positions across the province, targeting pro-Kremlin forces' resupply routes across the river and preparing for a final push to reclaim the city.</p> <p>The ISW think tank also said Sunday that Russia's latest war strategy of targeting power plants in recent days appears to be aimed at diminishing Ukrainians' will to fight and forcing Ukraine's government to spend additional resources to protect civilians and energy infrastructure. It said the effort was unlikely to damage Ukrainian morale but would have significant economic impact.</p> <p>The Russian attacks on power supplies forced the emergency suspension of fertilizer production at a major chemical plant, Rivneazot, in northwestern Ukraine. The company said Sunday the suspension is not posing an environmental risk.</p> <p>The mayor of Enerhodar, home to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, reported an attack on a hotel used by Russian occupying forces and those who collaborate with them. It's unclear if anyone was hurt.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military said Sunday that Russian forces are now mostly on the defensive, but are keeping up offensive attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure and on several towns in the eastern Donbas area.</p> <p>Nine regions across Ukraine, from Odesa in the southwest to Kharkiv in the northeast, saw attacks again targeting energy and other critical infrastructure over the past day, the Ukrainian general staff said. It reported a total of 25 Russian air strikes and more than 100 missile and artillery strikes around Ukraine.</p> <p>Ukrainian counteroffensive forces in the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, meanwhile, targeted Russian-held facilities, notably in the town of Nova Kakhovka, and carried out 17 air strikes in the overall campaign, according to the Ukrainian general staff.</p> <p>In a Telegram post Sunday, the Ukrainian military claimed to have destroyed 14 Iranian-made Russian drones over the past day.</p> <p>Russian S-300 missile strikes overnight hit a residential neighborhood in the city of Mykolaiv, injuring three people, according to the Ukrainian military's southern command. Two apartment buildings, a playground and a warehouse were damaged or destroyed, it said in a Facebook post. Images posted on</p>

Telegram by local media and officials showed an apartment building with one side sheared off, and piles of rubble amid puddles on the adjacent ground.

Governors of two Russian regions that border northeastern Ukraine said defensive lines are being built, apparently in anticipation of cross-border attacks as Ukrainian troops advance.

Kursk Gov. Roman Starovoit said Sunday that two defensive lines in the region already have been built and a third one will be finished by Nov. 5.

Belgorod Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said that defensive lines were also built in his region. On Saturday, he posted pictures of lines of pyramid-shaped concrete blocks intended to block the movement of armored vehicles.

Elsewhere, Ukraine's security service said Sunday it has detained the longtime chief of a major aircraft engine factory, accusing him of collaborating with Russia by supplying military equipment for Russian attack aircraft.

Viacheslav Bohuslaiev, president of the Motor Sich plant in Zaporizhzhia, and another top factory official were charged with collaboration and "assisting the aggressor state."

The Ukrainian security service SBU said in a statement that the two are accused of colluding with a Russian arms maker close to the Kremlin to supply Ukrainian-made engines and spare parts to Russian forces. The SBU described a complex scheme using intermediaries in three countries to evade sanctions against Russia.

Motor Sich is one of Ukraine's leading manufacturers and has been a key maker of aircraft engines since Soviet times. Its facilities have been repeatedly targeted by Russian strikes during the war.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Chicago: 2 dead from monkeypox</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/people-die-chicago-weeks-diagnosed-monkeypox/story?id=91913356">https://abcnews.go.com/US/people-die-chicago-weeks-diagnosed-monkeypox/story?id=91913356</a>
GIST	<p>Two Chicago residents died after being diagnosed with the monkeypox virus, the city's Department of Health announced. The two were diagnosed with monkeypox over six weeks ago and had been hospitalized.</p> <p>The two had several other health conditions, including weakened immune systems, city officials said. The two deaths were unrelated to each other, they said.</p> <p>"Though the number of new MPV cases has declined substantially since summer, this is a stark reminder that MPV is dangerous and can cause serious illness, and in very rare cases, even death," said Chicago Department of Public Health Commissioner Allison Arwady on Friday. "Our hearts go out to these individuals' families and friends."</p> <p>Officials said they would not disclose any other information about the two cases, including where they were being treated, to protect their privacy.</p> <p>The U.S. has reported over 27,000 cases and six total deaths due to monkeypox, according to the <a href="#">Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</a>. Monkeypox cases have been reported in <a href="#">all 50 states</a>.</p> <p>The first confirmed case of monkeypox in the U.S. was <a href="#">reported in Massachusetts</a> in May.</p> <p>Monkeypox symptoms usually start within three weeks of exposure to the virus and the illness typically lasts two to four weeks, according to <a href="#">the CDC</a>.</p>



	<p>People with monkeypox get a rash that may be located on or near the genitals or anus and could be on other areas like hands, feet, chest, face or mouth. Other symptoms can include fever, chills, swollen lymph nodes, exhaustion, muscle aches and backache, headache and respiratory symptoms, according to the CDC.</p> <p>Those infected may experience all or only a few symptoms. If someone has flu-like symptoms they will usually develop a rash one to four days later, the CDC says.</p> <p>Officials said death due to monkeypox still remains rare. Among more than 75,000 cases reported in 2022, there have been 32 reported deaths, according to the World Health Organization.</p> <p>"The vast majority of people with [monkeypox] who died have had other health conditions along with [monkeypox] causing severely weakened immune systems," said Arwady.</p> <p>She added, "Please continue to take it seriously. If you're at risk of MPV infection, take prevention steps and get vaccinated to protect yourself and your loved ones. These measures are especially important if you have comorbidities and/or a weakened immune system."</p> <p>Chicago health officials encourage individuals who meet the eligibility criteria to get two doses of the monkeypox vaccine, 28 days apart.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Experts warn of severe flu season</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/experts-warn-severe-upcoming-flu-season-pediatric-hospitals/story?id=91913732">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/experts-warn-severe-upcoming-flu-season-pediatric-hospitals/story?id=91913732</a>
GIST	<p>A surge in pediatric patients with respiratory illnesses is overwhelming hospitals across the United States, as experts warn of a potentially severe flu season in the coming months.</p> <p>Pediatric bed capacity in hospitals <a href="#">is the highest</a> it has been in two years. Around the country, hospitals are being inundated with pediatric patients sick with respiratory illnesses filling up to 71% of the estimated 40,000 available hospital beds, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports.</p> <p>"[Various respiratory] viruses are all in play on top of SARS-CoV-2, and now the increasing amounts of influenza, which we had feared was coming in like a lion this year, has arrived," Dr. Charlotte Hobbs, professor of pediatric infectious disease and microbiology at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC), Children's of Mississippi, told ABC News.</p> <p>Dr. Michael Koster, the director of pediatric infectious diseases at Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island, says from mid-September to mid-October the number of young patients admitted into the hospital with respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a common respiratory virus that usually causes cold-like symptoms, doubled.</p> <p>"We are seeing patients coming from over 100 miles away, because their local pediatric hospital is full or has closed," Koster told ABC News, referencing the recent closing of several pediatric hospitals in New England.</p> <p>Lynnette Brammer, an epidemiologist in the influenza division at the CDC, says the national public health agency is monitoring the influx of respiratory viruses circulating.</p> <p>The CDC is reporting early increases in seasonal influenza activity in most of the United States, with the southeast and south-central areas of the country reporting the highest levels of activity.</p> <p>Experts say that the rise may be fueled, in part, by the softening of COVID restrictions, leaving many vulnerable to sickness as a potentially severe flu season approaches.</p>

"We've had reasonably quiet years as a result of all the efforts to control COVID. It means that there is a resurgence of some of these viruses that we have annually, but in a more significant way," said John Brownstein, Ph.D., an ABC News medical contributor and chief innovation officer at Boston Children's Hospital.

The transition to the winter months also typically sees an uptake in illnesses.

"As the weather becomes drier, people return inside, spend more time inside. And you layer that with a lot of population mobility, especially as the holidays come up, that becomes a real, perfect storm for the spread of flu," Brownstein said.

Just last week, 1,674 patients were admitted to the hospital with flu complications, [according to the CDC](#). This increased from 1,332 the week prior, the agency says.

Brownstein notes that we see a lot of variability year-to-year, but that this current flu season has been a very rapid rise and hasn't peaked yet.

"Usually, we see increases in flu start maybe in November or December. Normally, the peak happens in February, but we went into October already seeing increases in influenza activity," Brammer said.

Visits to health care providers are currently concentrated in younger people with the greatest percentage of visits for flu-like illness are for those under 5 years old at more than 10%, CDC data shows. The next highest percentage is 5 to 24-year-olds, at 5% of visits.

"A lot of years you do have influenza activity, start in children and then spread to the other age groups," Brammer said.

Puerto Rico, Louisiana, and Alabama joined New York, Washington, D.C., Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, and South Carolina in reporting high levels of flu-like illness last week, according to the CDC. At this time last year, Texas, Georgia and D.C were the only states to report similar levels.

"CDC is following our surveillance data so that we can keep people informed about influenza activity, promoting [the] influenza vaccine, and letting people know that this is the time of year to go ahead and get your flu vaccine," Brammer said.

Brammer notes the importance of antivirals to combat flu. However, "those medications really need to be taken in the first couple of days of illness. So, you need to see your doctor quickly," she adds.

The CDC recommends that everyone ages 6 months and older get a flu vaccine to help prevent infection and severe illness.

"It's really simple. We have a safe and effective vaccine. If you haven't gotten that vaccine yet, it's time to do so. You really want to get it ahead of Halloween," Brownstein said.

"Of course, it's never too late to do so. But the sooner the better," he adds.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Just stop oil: protest turned radical</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://theshillongtimes.com/2022/10/23/just-stop-oil-a-protest-turned-radical/">https://theshillongtimes.com/2022/10/23/just-stop-oil-a-protest-turned-radical/</a>
GIST	<p>Members of the protest group Just Stop Oil recently threw soup at Van Gogh's Sunflowers in the National Gallery in London. The action once again triggered debate about what kinds of protest are most effective.</p> <p>After a quick clean of the glass, the painting was back on display. But critics argued that the real damage had been done, by alienating the public from the cause itself (the demand that the UK government reverse its support for opening new oil and gas fields in the North Sea).</p>

Supporters of more militant forms of protest often point to historical examples such as the suffragettes. In contrast with Just Stop Oil's action, when the suffragette Mary Richardson went to the National Gallery to attack a painting called *The Rokeby Venus*, she slashed the canvas, causing major damage.

However, many historians argue that the contribution of the suffragettes to women getting the vote was negligible or even counterproductive. Such discussions often seem to rely on people's gut feelings about the impact of protest. But as a professor of cognitive psychology, I know that we don't have to rely on intuition – these are hypotheses that can be tested.

#### The activist's dilemma

In one set of experiments researchers showed people descriptions of protests and then measured their support for the protesters and the cause. Some participants read articles describing moderate protests such as peaceful marches.

Others read articles describing more extreme and sometimes violent protests, for example a fictitious action in which animal rights activists drugged a security guard in order to break into a lab and remove animals.

Protesters who undertook extreme actions were perceived to be more immoral, and participants reported lower levels of emotional connection and social identification with these “extreme” protesters. The effects of this kind of action on support for the cause were somewhat mixed (and negative effects may be specific to actions that incorporate the threat of violence).

Overall, these results paint a picture of the so-called activist's dilemma: activists must choose between moderate actions that are largely ignored and more extreme actions that succeed in gaining attention, but may be counterproductive to their aims as they tend to make people think less of the protesters.

Activists themselves tend to offer a different perspective: they say that accepting personal unpopularity is simply the price to be paid for the media attention they rely on to “get the conversation going” and win public support for the issue. But is this the right approach? Could activists be hurting their own cause?

#### Hating protesters doesn't affect support

I've conducted several experiments to answer such questions, often in collaboration with students at the University of Bristol. To influence participants' views of protesters we made use of a well-known framing effect whereby (even subtle) differences in how protests are reported have a pronounced impact, often serving to delegitimise the protest.

For example, the Daily Mail article reporting the Van Gogh protest referred to it as a “stunt” which is part of a “campaign of chaos” by “rebellious eco-zealots”. The article does not mention the protesters' demand.

Our experiments took advantage of this framing effect to test the relationship between attitudes to the protesters themselves and to their cause. If the public's support for a cause depends on how they feel about the protesters, then a negative framing – which leads to less positive attitudes toward protesters – should result in lower levels of support for the demands.

But that's not what we found. In fact, experimental manipulations that reduced support for the protesters had no impact on support for the demands of those protesters.

We've replicated this finding across a range of different types of nonviolent protest, including protests about racial justice, abortion rights and climate change, and across British, American and Polish participants (this work is being prepared for publication). When members of the public say, “I agree with your cause, I just don't like your methods,” we should take them at their word.

Decreasing the extent to which the public identifies with you may not be helpful for building a mass movement. But high publicity actions may actually be a very effective way to increase recruitment, given

relatively few people ever become activists. The existence of a radical flank also seems to increase support for more moderate factions of a social movement, by making these factions appear less radical.

Protest can set the agenda

Another concern may be that most of the attention obtained by radical actions is not about the issue, focusing instead on what the protesters did. However, even where this is true, the public conversation opens up the space for some discussion of the issue itself.

Protest plays a role in agenda seeding. It doesn't necessarily tell people what to think, but influences what they think about. Last year's Insulate Britain protests are a good example. In the months after the protests began on September 13 2021, the number of mentions of the word "insulation" (not "Insulate") in UK print media doubled.

Some people don't investigate the details of an issue, yet media attention may nevertheless promote the issue in their mind. A YouGov poll released in early June 2019 showed "the environment" ranked in the public's top three most important issues for the first time.

Pollsters concluded that the "sudden surge in concern is undoubtedly boosted by the publicity raised for the environmental cause by Extinction Rebellion" (which had recently occupied prominent sites in central London for two weeks). There's also evidence that home insulation has risen up the policy agenda since Insulate Britain's protests.

Dramatic protest isn't going away. Protagonists will continue to be the subject of negative media attention, which will lead to widespread public disapproval. But when we look at public support for the protesters' demands, there isn't any compelling evidence for nonviolent protest being counterproductive. People may "shoot the messenger", but they do – at least, sometimes – hear the message.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Fear: Russia threat Norway energy sector</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/fears-over-russian-threat-to-norways-energy-infrastructure/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/fears-over-russian-threat-to-norways-energy-infrastructure/</a>
GIST	<p>STAVANGER, Norway (AP) — Norwegian oil and gas workers normally don't see anything more threatening than North Sea waves crashing against the steel legs of their offshore platforms. But lately they have noticed a more troubling sight: unidentified drones buzzing in the skies overhead.</p> <p>With Norway replacing Russia as Europe's main source of natural gas, military experts suspect the unmanned aircraft are Moscow's doings. They list espionage, sabotage and intimidation as possible motives for the drone flights.</p> <p>The Norwegian government has sent warships, coastguard vessels and fighter jets to patrol around the offshore facilities. Norway's national guard stationed soldiers around onshore refineries that also were buzzed by drones.</p> <p>Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre has invited the navies of NATO allies Britain, France and Germany to help address what could be more than a Norwegian problem.</p> <p>Precious little of the offshore oil that provides vast income for Norway is used by the country's 5.4 million inhabitants. Instead, it powers much of Europe. Natural gas is another commodity of continental significance.</p> <p>"The value of Norwegian gas to Europe has never been higher," Ståle Ulriksen, a researcher at the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy, said. "As a strategic target for sabotage, Norwegian gas pipelines are probably the highest value target in Europe."</p> <p>Closures of airports, and evacuations of an oil refinery and a gas terminal last week due to drone sightings caused huge disruptions. But with winter approaching in Europe, there is worry the drones may portend a</p>

bigger threat to the 9,000 kilometers (5,600 miles) of gas pipelines that spider from Norway's sea platforms to terminals in Britain and mainland Europe.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine in late February, European Union countries have scrambled to replace their Russian gas imports with shipments from Norway. The suspected sabotage of the Nordstream I and II pipelines in the Baltic Sea last month happened a day before Norway opened a new Baltic pipeline to Poland.

Amund Revheim, who heads the North Sea and environment group for Norway's South West Police force, said his team interviewed more than 70 offshore workers who have spotted drones near their facilities.

"The working thesis is that they are controlled from vessels or submarines nearby," Revheim said.

Winged drones have a longer range, but investigators considered credible a sighting of a helicopter-style bladed model near the Sleipner platform, located in a North Sea gas field 250 kilometers (150 miles) from the coast.

Norwegian police have worked closely with military investigators who are analyzing marine traffic. Some platform operators have reported seeing Russian-flagged research vessels in close vicinity. Revheim said no pattern has been established from legal marine traffic and he is concerned about causing unnecessary, disruptive worry for workers.

But Ulriksen, of the naval academy, said the distinction between Russian civilian and military ships is narrow and the reported research vessels could fairly be described as "spy ships."

The arrest of at least seven Russian nationals caught either carrying or illegally flying drones over Norwegian territory has raised tensions. On Wednesday, the same day a drone sighting grounded planes in Bergen, Norway's second-biggest city, the Norwegian Police Security Service took over the case from local officers.

"We have taken over the investigation because it is our job to investigate espionage and enforce sanction rules against Russia," Martin Bernsen, an official with the service known by the Norwegian acronym PST. He said the "sabotage or possible mapping" of energy infrastructure was an ongoing concern.

Støre, the prime minister, warned that Norway would take action against foreign intelligence agencies. "It is not acceptable for foreign intelligence to fly drones over Norwegian airports. Russians are not allowed to fly drones in Norway," he said.

Russia's Embassy in Oslo hit back Thursday, claiming that Norway was experiencing a form of "psychosis" causing "paranoia."

Naval academy researcher thinks that is probably part of the plan.

"Several of the drones have been flown with their lights on," he said. "They are supposed to be observed. I think it is an attempt to intimidate Norway and the West."

The wider concern is that they are part of a hybrid strategy to both intimidate and gather information on vital infrastructure, which could later be targeted for sabotage in a potential strike against the West.

"I do not believe we are heading for a conventional war with Russia," Ulriksen said. "But a hybrid war ... I think we are already in it."

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HEADLINE	10/22 Italy first female PM takes office
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/giorgia-meloni-taking-power-in-italy-promises-a-pro-western-course-11666431846?mod=hp_listb_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/giorgia-meloni-taking-power-in-italy-promises-a-pro-western-course-11666431846?mod=hp_listb_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>ROME—Giorgia Meloni was sworn in as Italy’s prime minister on Saturday, assuming power at the helm of a right-wing coalition beset by internal squabbles over Rome’s position toward Moscow.</p> <p>A staunch Atlanticist, Ms. Meloni has said her government will be steadfast in its support for Ukraine and in its opposition to Russia’s war on the country.</p> <p>But cracks in her right-wing alliance began to appear even before her government was sworn in, when former premier Silvio Berlusconi, a junior coalition member, was recorded defending Russian President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. In response, Ms. Meloni said adherence to <a href="#">a pro-Western foreign policy</a> was a requirement for belonging to her government.</p> <p>Ms. Meloni, whose party won the biggest share of the vote in <a href="#">last month’s parliamentary elections</a>, succeeds Mario Draghi as Italy’s head of government and becomes the country’s first female prime minister.</p> <p>As prime minister, she will have to tackle the urgent issue of high energy prices as winter sets in and households and businesses struggle with high heating bills. Another big challenge will be managing her unruly coalition allies, some of whom have blamed sanctions on Russia for Italy’s energy-price woes.</p> <p>The 45-year-old Roman has sought to reposition herself as a mainstream conservative, playing down her far-right populist roots. Her Brothers of Italy party descends from a movement founded by former fascists after World War II, and its supporters and members include some admirers of Italy’s former fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.</p> <p>Ms. Meloni has denounced fascism and toned down her criticism of the European Union. She maintains a hard-line position on identity issues such as immigration and gay rights.</p> <p>In recent months, she has worked hard to <a href="#">reassure Italy’s European allies</a> and financial markets that her government won’t be a destabilizing force in the bloc. She has embraced pro-business economic policies such as lower taxes but also vowed to keep Italy’s massive public debt in check. Her government is expected to work closely with the EU to <a href="#">tackle the energy crisis</a>, confront Russia and secure continued funding from the bloc.</p> <p>Mr. Putin has slashed Russia’s natural-gas deliveries to the EU, hoping that economic pain will fuel public discontent and pressure European leaders to reduce their support for Kyiv and lift sanctions on Moscow.</p> <p>The cost-of-living crisis has led to protests and strikes in countries including France and Germany. Support for sanctions among Europeans has slipped since the start of the war, although sympathy for Ukraine’s plight remains widespread across the continent.</p> <p>A strongly anti-Russian government led by Ms. Meloni could pressure other European countries to stay the course. But comments made by her junior coalition partners—Mr. Berlusconi and Matteo Salvini of the anti-immigration League party—have raised questions about the government’s cohesion. Some observers doubt it will last the full five-year term.</p> <p>During the election campaign, Mr. Salvini repeatedly questioned sanctions on Russia. More recently, Mr. Berlusconi spoke in defense of Mr. Putin. During a closed-door meeting with lawmakers of his Forza Italia party, he was surreptitiously recorded saying that the Russian leader’s intention was to replace Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky with a group of “respectable and reasonable people.” The former Italian premier blamed Mr. Zelensky and his Western backers for prolonging the war. His lawmakers applauded.</p> <p>Mr. Berlusconi has long considered himself a close personal friend of Mr. Putin. In the leaked audio, which was made public earlier this week, he said they recently rekindled their friendship. The Russian leader gave Mr. Berlusconi 20 bottles of vodka for his 86th birthday last month, Mr. Berlusconi sent him bottles of wine in return, and the two exchanged “very sweet letters,” Mr. Berlusconi said.</p>



	<p>After the audio was released, Ms. Meloni said that on her watch Italy would remain firmly aligned with its European and Atlantic allies. “Whoever disagrees with this key principle will not be part of the government,” she said.</p> <p>Mr. Berlusconi and his party colleagues backpedaled on his leaked remarks, reiterating that they remain committed to a pro-Western stance in Europe’s confrontation with Russia. Forza Italia deputy leader Antonio Tajani flew to Brussels to reassure the EU leaders of his party’s position on Russia. On Saturday Mr. Tajani was sworn in as Italy’s new foreign minister.</p> <p>Italy’s new finance minister, meanwhile, is the League’s deputy leader Giancarlo Giorgetti, a moderate conservative seen as a counterbalance within his party to the populist Mr. Salvini.</p> <p>Securing energy supplies is the most important international challenge for most Italians, surpassing other issues such as immigration, according to a recent poll by the Italian Institute for International Affairs and the University of Siena.</p> <p>Italy has moved quickly this year to increase gas deliveries from Algeria and other supplies, while cutting the share of Russian gas by more than half compared with before the war. Italy is confident of having enough gas this winter, but industry and households are worried about the high prices of heating and electricity. EU leaders are working on ways to bring down prices.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Ukraine scrambles to restore electricity</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-scrambles-to-restore-electricity-after-russian-missile-barrage-11666522193?mod=hp_lead_pos9">https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-scrambles-to-restore-electricity-after-russian-missile-barrage-11666522193?mod=hp_lead_pos9</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—Ukraine was working to restore electricity across the country Sunday following a Russian attack on critical infrastructure, as Moscow’s grip on the southern Kherson region weakened.</p> <p>Almost 1.5 million Ukrainians <a href="#">were left without power</a> after Russia unleashed a volley of cruise missiles on Saturday—the latest salvo in a campaign to <a href="#">deprive the country of heat and light</a> as winter sets in.</p> <p>Officials in Kyiv say the recent attacks, which have damaged nearly a third of the country’s energy infrastructure, seek to undermine Ukrainians’ will to fight and provoke a humanitarian crisis. There were power outages in more than 10 regions of Ukraine as a result of Saturday’s attack, which energy-grid operator Ukrenergo said was one of the most destructive to date.</p> <p>In his nightly address, President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukrainians wouldn’t be deterred. “Russian propagandists are lying when they say that this terror against our infrastructure and people can somehow slow down the active actions of our military,” he said.</p> <p>Ukraine has urged residents to <a href="#">limit their electricity use</a> to reduce pressure on the grid, while calling on Western partners to expedite the delivery of weapons systems to protect its skies.</p> <p>Sixteen <a href="#">Iranian-made drones</a> were shot down by Ukrainian air defense overnight, according to the country’s air-force command, including 11 over the southern port city of Mykolaiv.</p> <p>The recent <a href="#">shift toward targeting infrastructure</a> with cruise missiles and drones comes as Russian forces struggle on the battlefield, prompting criticism of Moscow’s approach to the war.</p> <p>After months of strikes against Russian supply lines in the occupied Kherson region, Kyiv’s strategy of squeezing the invading forces is gradually taking effect.</p>



Ukraine's armed forces on Saturday said Russian troops had abandoned the villages of Charivne and Chkalove in the Kherson region, while officers and medical personnel were also evacuated from the town of Beryslav.

In a rare pessimistic take on the war effort, the commander of the Russian Armed Forces in Ukraine acknowledged last week that Moscow's position in the southern Kherson region was tenuous, saying "difficult decisions" might have to be taken, without elaborating.

The recently appointed Gen. Sergei Surovikin said Ukraine had damaged the main bridge used to supply Russian forces in Kherson and a crossing over a dam to the northeast. The priority now is to preserve civilians and military personnel, he said.

Having given civilians the option to leave this week, Russian-installed authorities in Kherson told residents to leave the city immediately "because of the tense situation on the front line."

Moscow sent thousands of soldiers, including some of its best units, to reinforce its defenses in the Kherson region. Ukraine has hampered the Kremlin's ability to keep those troops supplied by using U.S.-provided [long-range rockets](#) to blow up bridges, ammunition dumps and logistics centers.

If Russia's military is forced to abandon the city—the only Ukrainian provincial capital captured since its February invasion of the country—it would be a significant blow to the Kremlin. Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) feted Kherson as new Russian territory in [a ceremony in Moscow](#) less than a month ago following a staged vote on the region's illegal annexation.

A major Ukrainian advance on the southern front would also demonstrate the ability of Kyiv's forces to take even well-entrenched Russian positions.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said Russian forces were likely preparing to destroy the dam at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant in order to flood and widen the Dnipro River to delay any Ukrainian advances.

Mr. Zelensky accused Russia of mining the dam last week.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Vice president to make Seattle visit</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3681431/vice-president-kamala-harris-to-make-seattle-visit/">https://mynorthwest.com/3681431/vice-president-kamala-harris-to-make-seattle-visit/</a>
GIST	<p>Vice President Kamala Harris will be stopping in Seattle on Oct. 26.</p> <p>The VP will be delivering remarks at an event highlighting the Biden-Harris administration's investments in reducing emissions from school buses, according to a release from her office. Harris will be accompanied by EPA Administrator Michael Regan for the event.</p> <p>Harris will also be delivering remarks at an undisclosed finance event, according to her office. No other specifics were released regarding her trip.</p> <p>The former U.S. Senator last made an appearance in Seattle during her presidential campaign in September 2019.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Day 241 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/22/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-241-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/22/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-241-of-the-invasion</a>

GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said that Russia launched 36 rockets in a “massive attack” on <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</b> In a post on Telegram he said that most of the missiles fired overnight were shot down by the country’s air defence systems.</li> <li>• <b>Russian military forces carried out another missile attack targeting energy facilities in western Ukraine, the country’s power grid operator said today.</b> In a message on Telegram, Ukrenergo said that the “scale of damage is comparable or may exceed the consequences of the attack on October 10-12”. It said that crews are starting to repair the facilities after the rocket attack, but that restrictions are in place as they try to restore the electricity supply.</li> <li>• <b>Hundreds of thousands of people in central and western Ukraine woke up today to power outages and periodic bursts of gunfire,</b> as Ukrainian air defence tried to shoot down drones and incoming missiles. Kira Rudik, a member of the Ukrainian parliament, says 1.5 million people are without electricity after Russian strikes against power stations on Saturday.</li> <li>• <b>Iran’s foreign ministry has strongly condemned a call by France, Germany and Britain for the UN to probe accusations that Russia has used drones from Iran to attack Ukraine.</b> Ukraine says that Russia has used Iranian-made Shahed-136 attack drones. If true, the allegations would mark a breach of UN security council resolution 2231.</li> <li>• <b>Ukrainian forces have bombarded Russian positions in the occupied Kherson region, targeting resupply routes across a major river while inching closer on Friday to a full assault on the key city.</b> Associated Press reported that Russian-installed officials were said to be desperately trying to turn Kherson city – a prime objective for both sides because of its key industries and major river and seaport – into a “fortress” while attempting to evacuate tens of thousands of residents.</li> <li>• <b>The Japanese prime minister, Fumio Kishida, warned today that Russia using nuclear weapons would be seen as an “act of hostility against humanity”.</b> Kishida, who leads the only country ever hit with a nuclear bomb, described President Vladimir Putin’s sabre rattling as “deeply disturbing”.</li> <li>• <b>Spain on Saturday said it would send 14 fighter jets to Bulgaria and Romania to bolster NATO’s eastern flank</b> as the defence alliance strengthens its deterrence capacity following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Day 242 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/23/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-242-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/23/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-242-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russian-installed authorities have ordered all residents of the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson to leave “immediately”</b> ahead of an expected advance by <a href="#">Ukrainian troops waging a counteroffensive</a> to recapture it. The regional pro-Kremlin administration called on civilians to use boat crossings over a major river to move deeper into Russian-held territory, citing a tense situation on the front and the threat of shelling and alleged “terror attacks” by Kyiv, Associated Press reported. On Friday, Ukrainian forces bombarded Russian positions across the region, targeting resupply routes.</li> <li>• <b>More than a dozen Russian missiles pounded energy facilities and other infrastructure across Ukraine</b> on Saturday, the Ukrainian air force said, with strikes causing blackouts in parts of different regions. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the Russian attacks had struck on a “very wide” scale, Reuters reported. He pledged that his military would improve on an already good record of downing missiles with help from its partners.</li> <li>• <b>Russian military forces targeted energy facilities in western Ukraine,</b> the country’s power grid operator said on Saturday. Ukrenergo said on Telegram that the “scale of damage is comparable or may exceed the consequences of the attack on October 10-12”. It said repair crews were starting to repair the facilities after the rocket attack, but that restrictions were in place as they tried to restore the electricity supply.</li> <li>• <b>Hundreds of thousands of people in central and western Ukraine have woken up to power outages and periodic bursts of gunfire,</b> as Ukrainian air defence tried to shoot down drones and incoming missiles. Kira Rudik, a member of the Ukrainian parliament, said 1.5 million people were without electricity after Russian strikes against power stations on Saturday.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ukraine’s prime minister said that Russia has plunged Ukraine into a humanitarian catastrophe</b> by attacking its energy infrastructure. Denys Shmyhal told German newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine that Russia wanted to condemn Ukraine to “a cold winter when many people could literally freeze to death”.</li> <li>• <b>Ukrainian forces have pushed Russians out of the Charivne and Chkalove settlements in the Kherson region</b>, the Ukrainian forces’ general staff said on Saturday.</li> <li>• <b>Iran’s foreign ministry has strongly condemned a call by France, Germany and Britain for the UN to investigate accusations that Russia has used drones from Iran to attack Ukraine.</b> Ukraine says Russia has used Iranian-made Shahed-136 attack drones. If true, the allegations would mark a breach of UN security council resolution 2231.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Court blocks student forgiveness loan plan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/21/biden-student-loan-forgiveness-plan-blocked-federal/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/21/biden-student-loan-forgiveness-plan-blocked-federal/</a>
GIST	<p>A federal appeals court on Friday temporarily blocked the Biden administration from moving forward with its student loan forgiveness plan.</p> <p>On Friday, the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals granted an emergency petition, blocking the feds from beginning to forgive millions of student loan borrowers’ debt until further briefing before the court, scheduled for next week.</p> <p>The president had planned to begin forgiving the debt this weekend.</p> <p>Six Republican-led states sued in September seeking to halt the move, arguing it would further damage the economy.</p> <p>The Biden administration announced in August plans to cancel \$10,000 to \$20,000 of student debt per borrower for those who make less than \$125,000 a year, or \$250,000 for married couples.</p> <p>The U.S. Supreme Court had refused to block the plan earlier this week through an emergency petition presented to Justice Amy Coney Barrett in a separate case involving a challenge by a Wisconsin taxpayer group.</p> <p>President Biden cited the HEROES Act for supporting his move, which was passed after Sept. 11 and gave the executive branch authority to forgive certain debt regarding the military during emergencies.</p> <p>The Biden administration says the COVID-19 pandemic is considered an emergency under the law, applying it to student loan borrowers.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 No treat: candy prices up 21% over last year</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/21/not-treat-candy-prices-21-over-last-year-heading-h/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/21/not-treat-candy-prices-21-over-last-year-heading-h/</a>
GIST	<p>Consumers stocking up on <a href="#">Halloween</a> candy for trick-or-treaters might want to consider chocolate if they don’t want to take a bigger chunk out of their wallets this year.</p> <p>Candy prices rose an average of 21% in September from a year ago, with non-chocolate treats taking the biggest hit, according to the retail data collection firm <a href="#">Datassembly</a>.</p> <p>The biggest increases were a 42% spike in the price of Skittles and a 35% jump for Starburst in September from a year earlier, the company’s October Grocery Price Index <a href="#">reported</a>.</p> <p>At increases of 6% and 7%, respectively, the prices of Nestle Crunch and Butterfinger candy bars (made with cocoa but technically not chocolate) changed the least.</p> <p>The price of candy overall rose 7.6% in the third quarter, the highest of any food category.</p>

Datasembly CEO Ben Reich said increases in the cost of raw sugar, supply chain issues and rising energy costs have driven the spike.

“With Halloween around the corner, we’ve identified a significant change in the candy category as it continues to rise in price on a national average,” Mr. Reich said in a statement.

Datasembly’s analysis of more than 2 billion product data points also found that bags of assorted candies increased in price by 8% from last year.

The report confirms what some leading candy companies have projected as they try to meet a pandemic-era spike in demand for sweets.

In their half-year reports over the summer, Pennsylvania-based Hershey Co. and Switzerland-based Nestle said pandemic-driven global supply chain disruptions and Russia’s war on Ukraine have made cocoa and other ingredients scarcer and more expensive.

The maker of Nestle Crunch announced a 6.5% price increase to offset lower profit margins amid “significant and unprecedented cost inflation.” Nestle now expects an 8% increase in sales this year, higher than its previous 5% estimate.

Inflation is driving a spike in Halloween spending across the board as Americans pay more for less this year.

The National Retail Federation projects Americans will spend a record \$10.6 billion on Halloween, topping the previous record high of \$10.1 billion last year.

The industry group predicts consumers will spend an average of \$100 on Halloween candy, decor, cards and costumes this year.

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HEADLINE	10/23 Russian superyachts safe haven in Turkey
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/world/europe/russian-superyachts-find-safe-haven-in-turkey-raising-concerns-in-washington.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/world/europe/russian-superyachts-find-safe-haven-in-turkey-raising-concerns-in-washington.html</a>
GIST	<p>PORT AZURE, Turkey — On a hot August evening at a marina on Turkey’s southern coast, the crew of the Flying Fox was hard at work, keeping the 446-foot superyacht immaculate for future guests willing to pay \$3 million a week. One crew member leaned over the railing at the stern, wiping the highly polished surface next to the ship’s nameplate. Another was busy with a squeegee, cleaning glass.</p> <p>The Flying Fox, the world’s biggest yacht available for charter, played host last year to Beyoncé and Jay-Z, who skipped the Met Gala in New York to cruise the Mediterranean and enjoy the vessel’s over-the-top amenities: a 4,300-square-foot wellness center with a Turkish bath and a fully equipped beauty spa, among many others.</p> <p>Then Russia invaded Ukraine. Since then, the Flying Fox has been caught up in the dragnet of international sanctions designed to hobble the lifestyles of the oligarchs who help sustain President Vladimir V. Putin’s rule.</p> <p>Yet, while some superyachts owned by or linked to sanctioned Russian oligarchs have been seized in ports around the world, the Flying Fox and others caught up in the broader Russia sanctions have found safe haven in Turkey, the only NATO member not to impose sanctions on Russia.</p> <p>The flotilla of Russian superyachts in Turkish waters is raising tensions with the United States, which sees Turkey’s welcoming of the vessels as a symptom of the much larger problem: Russia’s access to Turkey’s financial system, potentially undermining Western sanctions.</p>

Turkey's strongman ruler, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has criticized Western sanctions against Russia, said in March that Turkey could not impose sanctions because of its energy needs and industry deals. "There is nothing to be done there," he said.

In all, at least 32 yachts tied to oligarchs and sanctioned entities have sheltered in the country's waters in recent months, able to move about or moor in its picturesque coves and bays without fear of seizure, according to a New York Times analysis. Ownership records of superyachts for the ultrawealthy are notorious for being hidden behind layers of shell companies. The Times analysis was constructed with news accounts linking Russian oligarchs to particular yachts that were then matched with vessel positions available on commercial sites such as MarineTraffic. In many instances, the yachts were spotted in Turkish waters by a Times reporter.

On Aug. 19, the Treasury Department issued a statement saying that the deputy treasury secretary, Wally Adeyemo, had told a Turkish official that the United States was concerned about Russians using Turkey to evade sanctions.

Three days later, Mr. Adeyemo sent a letter to Turkish business groups warning of penalties if they worked with sanctioned Russian individuals or entities. Turkish banks, he added, risked losing vital correspondent relationships with global banks — and even access to the U.S. dollar — if they did business with sanctioned Russian banks.

In September, several Turkish banks [stopped accepting](#) the Mir payment system — the Russian equivalent of Visa or MasterCard. Their actions came after the U.S. [warned](#) that financial institutions expanding the use of Mir or entering into new agreements risked running afoul of American sanctions against Russia.

Nevertheless, Turkish marinas continue to service sanctioned Russians and their superyachts.

The warm turquoise waters, secluded beaches and trendy establishments of Turkey's Mediterranean coast have long made it a popular and convenient destination for Russian yacht owners and charterers during the summer. Local restaurant menus are printed in three languages: Turkish, English and Russian.

In June, the Flying Fox was singled out by the United States as "blocked property" and its management company, Imperial Yachts, was also sanctioned. Nevertheless, the Flying Fox has been moored since at least May at Port Azure, a marina in the posh resort town of Göcek. Other superyachts there owned by or linked to sanctioned Russians have been cruising from one postcard-worthy cove to another in the area.

The town's polluted waters are unsuitable for swimming, an attractive feature for superyacht owners because it keeps away crowds and unwanted publicity. And the vessels can easily steam to pristine waters nearby. If the pampered guests have any unfulfilled needs, small boats roam around the harbor, selling groceries, ice cream, Turkish crepes and even massages.

Port Azure, touted as the first "mega-yacht-only marina" in Turkey, was opened last year by STFA, one of Turkey's biggest conglomerates. The [marina](#), which prides itself on its website as being a "haven" that makes "problems big and small go away," has hosted at least eight yachts linked to Russian oligarchs or sanctioned companies this past summer, the Times analysis found.

On June 1, a Turkish yacht broker posted on Instagram a [video](#) taken at Port Azure showing a lineup of five yachts collectively worth almost \$1 billion, including the Flying Fox; the Lana, recently listed at \$1.8 million a week for charter by Imperial; and the Galactica Super Nova, linked to Vagit Alekperov, a sanctioned Putin ally, according to news media reports.

As of Oct. 20 there were at least 13 yachts in Turkey linked to sanctions, the Times analysis found. Of those, four were owned by or linked to sanctioned individuals and nine have recently been offered for charter by Imperial, the sanctioned Monaco-based company.

A spokeswoman for Imperial Yachts said that after the firm was sanctioned in June, its clients terminated their contracts with the company and that it “no longer manages or charters” any of the yachts in Turkish waters.

But until late August, Imperial advertised yachts for charter and for sale on its website, including yachts in Turkish waters. After an inquiry by The Times, the listings were removed from Imperial’s website, which now displays only a notice announcing that the company had been sanctioned. The company spokeswoman said that it had “kept its other pages alive as a reflection of its former brand.”

“During the time that the other website pages were visible, Imperial did not engage in any business engagements,” Imperial said in response to emailed questions.

Roman Abramovich, the most visible Russian oligarch recently seen in Turkey, does not use Imperial Yachts to manage the construction of his opulent yachts or staff them after they are put to sea. Four yachts owned by or linked to Mr. Abramovich, who has been sanctioned by Britain and the European Union, the Times analysis shows, were in Turkey in August.

Should the United States choose, it has tools at its disposal to enforce its sanctions on the Russian oligarchs, even if their vessels are in Turkish waters and even if the Turkish government is unwilling to cooperate, said Daniel Tannebaum, a former sanctions official who served at the U.S. Treasury and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

One way, he said, would be to place sanctions on companies that service the oligarchs’ yachts in Turkey — the marinas, caterers and fueling companies. In that case, not just Russian yacht owners but also the many American yacht owners now in Turkish waters would have to take their business elsewhere, while the banks that do business with these companies might close their accounts so as to avoid becoming a target.

Superyachts are a significant source of income for the marinas, as well as other businesses in the area. In one example, Turkish news media outlets reported in April that Mr. Abramovich’s biggest yacht, the 533-foot-long Eclipse, ran up a fuel bill of \$1.66 million in the port town of Marmaris. Its tanks took 22 hours to fill.

One of the four superyachts linked to Mr. Abramovich, the 460-foot Solaris, is moored in the Yalıkavak Marina in Bodrum, a trendy resort town in Turkey’s south. While lying idle, it still has 20 crew members who make trips every day to provision it, supply it with water and electricity and dispose of its waste, according to a port employee with direct knowledge of the matter, who spoke anonymously because he wasn’t authorized to speak publicly.

Solaris also receives a truckload of food every week through a catering company, he said, adding: “Twenty cases of asparagus — what would you do with so much asparagus?”

Yalıkavak is Turkey’s most luxurious marina, with stores like Prada, Louis Vuitton and Valentino on a promenade lined with palm trees overlooking the harbor. At least three yachts recently offered for charter by Imperial, the sanctioned management company, and three other yachts owned by or linked to oligarchs moored at Yalıkavak Marina this summer, the Times analysis shows.

In an emailed statement, the marina said that even though Turkey has not adopted sanctions, because it recognizes “international concerns,” the Solaris has been kept outside the marina’s boundaries. As for the vessels associated with Imperial Yachts, the marina said that it did not know, as the summer is “quite a busy time” and that it didn’t have a system in place to check whether an individual yacht might fall under international sanctions.

In August, the Eclipse, one of the yachts linked to Mr. Abramovich, was anchored in the middle of the bay off Göcek, a three-and-a-half-hour drive down the coast from Yalıkavak.



	<p>On an early morning in August, Ömer Kırpat, 56, was fishing on the shore in Göcek, sitting under a willow tree overlooking the yachts.</p> <p>“The bells aren’t jingling,” he said, pointing to the bells attached to his rods to alert him when the fish bite. He showed his bucket with one lone fish inside, explaining that the fish avoid the shore because of pollution and noise from the boats.</p> <p>Port Azure, the Göcek marina hosting the Flying Fox, was built over the port of a state-owned paper factory where Mr. Kırpat worked for 13 years as a security guard until it was privatized in 2001. He used to go there to swim, fish and have picnics every weekend with other factory workers and their families. “It was sparkly clean,” he said. “We caught the biggest fish there.”</p> <p>He tried to go into Port Azure last year but was chased away. “We’re banned,” he said. “Soon they won’t even allow us to look inside. It’s heartbreaking.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Murky govt. rules: Covid lab manipulations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/science/covid-virus-laboratory-experiments.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/science/covid-virus-laboratory-experiments.html</a>
GIST	<p>Scientists at Boston University came under fire this week for an <a href="#">experiment</a> in which they tinkered with the Covid virus. Breathless <a href="#">headlines</a> claimed they had created a deadly new strain, and the National Institutes of Health <a href="#">rebuked</a> the university for not seeking the government’s permission.</p> <p>As it turned out, the experiments, performed on mice, were not what the inflammatory media coverage suggested. The manipulated virus strain was actually less lethal than the original.</p> <p>But the uproar highlighted shortcomings in <a href="#">how the U.S. government regulates research</a> on pathogens that pose a risk, however small, of setting off a pandemic. It revealed loopholes that allow experiments to go unnoticed, a lack of transparency about how the risk of experiments is judged and a seemingly haphazard pattern in the federal government’s oversight policy, known as the P3CO framework.</p> <p>Even as the government publicly reprimanded Boston University, it raised no red flags publicly about several <a href="#">other experiments</a> it funded in which researchers manipulated coronaviruses in similar ways. <a href="#">One of them</a> was carried out by the government’s own scientists.</p> <p>The Boston episode “certainly tells us the P3CO framework needs to be overhauled pretty dramatically,” said Angela Rasmussen, a virologist at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. “The whole process is kind of a black box that makes it really difficult for researchers.”</p> <p>The N.I.H. said that every study it considers for funding is vetted for safety concerns by agency experts, who decide whether to escalate it to a higher-level dangerous pathogen committee.</p> <p>Some experiments, though, either because they are conceived later on or because they do not rely directly on federal funds, end up falling outside the scope of that process, leading to confusion, biosafety experts said. And the rules could be overhauled soon. After months of meetings, a committee of government advisers is expected to deliver updated recommendations for such research by December or January, the agency said.</p> <p><b>Evolving Rules</b></p> <p>The government’s policy for such experiments is the Potential Pandemic Pathogen Care and Oversight, or P3CO framework. It was <a href="#">established</a> five years ago in response to a set of contentious experiments in which researchers set out to transform an influenza virus that infected birds into one that could infect mammals.</p>



Under the policy, the N.I.H. and other agencies are supposed to flag grant applications for experiments that could potentially produce a new pandemic. Risky research may not be funded or may require extra safety measures.

Critics of P3CO have complained that this evaluation happens largely in secret and ignores projects that aren't funded by the U.S. government. In January of 2020, the government's advisory panel, the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity, held a [public meeting](#) to discuss reforms. But subsequent meetings were canceled, ironically enough, because of Covid's arrival.

In the months that followed, Republican politicians [attacked](#) the N.I.H. for supporting past research on coronaviruses at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, suggesting that a lab leak there might have been responsible for the pandemic. (In July, Dr. Rasmussen and other scientists [published studies](#) pointing instead to a market in Wuhan as the origin.)

Under this growing scrutiny, the N.I.H.'s advisory board met in February, worked on new recommendations over the summer and released a [draft](#) last month. It proposed expanding the scope of pathogens that can prompt a review beyond those that have a high fatality rate. Unlike smallpox or Ebola, Covid has a low fatality rate but is so contagious that it still wreaked global devastation.

In its ongoing discussions, the board has also considered the risk posed by computer software, such as programs that could figure out how to make a pathogen spread faster.

Researchers had mixed reactions to the new guidelines.

"The first draft makes some important advances and leaves a lot of things unaddressed," said Marc Lipsitch, an epidemiologist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health who has been pushing for tighter rules since the bird flu experiments more than a decade ago.

In [comments](#) submitted to the advisory board last month, Dr. Lipsitch and his colleagues said that proposed experiments must be justified by real, practical benefits rather than unsupported claims.

Other scientists, while welcoming clearer guidance, worried about onerous regulations that would bog down commonplace and innocuous experiments.

"Tell us what paperwork we need to fill out so we can do our jobs, which is to help the public respond to these types of things when they come at us," said Robert F. Garry, Jr., a virologist at Tulane University.

### **Boston Experiments**

The ambiguity of the government's policy was laid bare this week when the news hit about the experiments at Boston University.

Mohsan Saeed, a virologist at the school, and his colleagues posted a report online aiming to understand the differences between Omicron and other variants. The researchers made a new virus that was identical to the original version but carried an Omicron spike. They then put the modified virus into a strain of mice that is very sensitive to Covid and widely used to study the disease.

Previous research had found that the original strain of Covid killed 100 percent of the mice. The new study found that the modified virus was less deadly, killing 80 percent.

Last Sunday, [a story ran in The Daily Mail](#) with a headline claiming that "scientists have created a new deadly Covid strain with an 80 percent kill rate." The following day, an N.I.H. official, Emily Erbelding, told the news site [Stat](#) that Boston University should have discussed the experiments with the agency ahead of time.

But, some researchers pointed out, the federal guidance is vague on what disclosures are required after a research proposal is approved. Science often takes unexpected turns, and officials do not generally apply the guidance to experiments that are conceived after funding has been granted.

“The government should be providing the guidance to help people figure this out,” said Gregory Koblenz, a biodefense specialist at George Mason University.

In a statement to The New York Times, Boston University said that the experiments were approved by its own safety committee as well as the Boston Public Health Commission.

The university also said its scientists were not obligated to notify the N.I.H. because, although they had received government funding for related research, they used university funds to pay for the experiments in question. The agency said it is reviewing the matter.

The highly publicized dispute over technical laboratory protocols sent mixed messages to the scientific community and the public, said Syra Madad, an infectious disease epidemiologist at NYC Health and Hospitals.

“It seems like an epic communication failure,” said Dr. Madad, who is also on the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity. “This is why we’re revisiting the policy — to make sure that it’s clear, it’s transparent, it makes sense and it is operationally feasible.”

Dr. Madad and other experts agreed that the proposal for the Boston University experiments should have gone through a more rigorous evaluation. “In my opinion, that certainly looks like it meets the criteria for P3CO review,” she said.

But even if the study had gone through that process, some scientists said, it would have likely been given the green light.

Jesse Bloom, a virologist at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, noted that the coronavirus is already rampant among humans and has evolved far beyond the variants used in the experiment. The hybrid lab virus would be unlikely to cause a serious threat if it escaped.

“I understand why it worries people because you are making a virus for which you can’t totally predict the properties,” Dr. Bloom said. “But this does not seem to me to be a particularly high risk.”

### **Similar Studies**

The N.I.H.’s stern public statements about Boston University’s research raised questions about the way it and other health agencies had assessed such experiments in the past. Last month, scientists with the Food and Drug Administration published a study in which they, like the Boston team, injected mice with coronaviruses engineered to carry an Omicron spike.

The F.D.A. is required to follow the P3CO rules. But the agency said in a statement that the hybrid virus created as part of its study did not amount to “a new version of the virus.” The study did not fall under the dangerous pathogen guidelines, the statement said, because “we set out to understand how the virus works, not identify new ways to make it more potent.”

Some independent experts said the agency’s rationale did not explain why the study passed muster: An experiment cannot bypass the approval process simply because the researchers did not intend to make a more dangerous virus.

“If it’s research that could be anticipated to possibly result in the enhancement of a potential pandemic pathogen — a more transmissible and/or virulent strain than exists in nature — it needs to be reviewed. Period,” Dr. Tom Inglesby, the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, said in an email.

The F.D.A. researchers are not the only American scientists to tinker with coronaviruses in this manner. At the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, scientists have relied partly on federal funding for [studies](#) on whether vaccines generate protection against coronaviruses altered to carry Omicron spikes.

Those techniques can save scientists months of waiting for samples of Omicron viruses from human patients, allowing them to study the dangers of new variants and anticipate the need for booster shots. Outside experts said the Texas experiments were even less risky than the Boston study because they generally infected cells, not live animals, with the viruses.

While proposals from the Texas team would have been reviewed by the N.I.H., they were not escalated to the dangerous pathogen committee. The agency did not say why. (Since 2017, only three studies that the N.I.H. proposed to fund were reviewed by that committee, [it has said.](#))

“There is really no one in charge of scanning the medical literature, and it can be random events that bring these particular experiments to public attention,” Dr. Inglesby said. “And it shouldn’t be that way.”

Others raised a different problem: Research that isn’t funded by the government does not have to follow the government’s rules.

“I think that ultimately we would all agree that publishing a policy that would be broadly applicable would be ideal,” said Karmella Haynes, a biomedical engineer at Emory University and a member of the National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity. “Now how to actually enforce that, I think, is beyond our charge.”

One possibility might be to come up with a policy modeled on the [Federal Select Agent Program](#), which requires anyone seeking to work with certain dangerous substances, such as anthrax, to register with the government.

“Any recommendation that does not include codifying the requirements in regulations with the force of law will not add up to anything,” said Richard Ebright, a molecular biologist at Rutgers University.

Federal officials, he added, may be under pressure to strengthen oversight next year if Republican proponents of a crackdown win power in the midterm elections in November.

On the other hand, a politically fractious debate could put better regulations even further out of reach, some said.

“I worry about inhibiting our ability to understand these viruses that have killed millions of people,” said Gigi Gronvall, a biosafety specialist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Seniors’ declining interest Covid boosters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/health/covid-vaccination-elderly.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/health/covid-vaccination-elderly.html</a>
GIST	<p>Linda Brantman, a retired membership salesperson at a health club in Chicago, was paying attention last month when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <a href="#">recommended the new bivalent booster</a> that protects against two variants of Covid-19. She went online and reserved an appointment at a Walgreens near her home.</p> <p>Ms. Brantman, 65, who was already vaccinated and boosted twice, has grappled with asthma on and off for years; she keeps an inhaler handy, even for an ordinary cold. If she were sick with Covid, she said, “I would definitely have breathing problems.” Within two weeks of the C.D.C. announcement, she had received the latest booster — and public health officials hope all Americans over 5 will also roll up their sleeves again.</p>

But many older Americans have responded more like Alan Turner, 65, who lives in New Castle, Del. and recently retired from an industrial design firm. He received the initial two doses of the vaccine but stopped updating his immunity after the first recommended booster. “I’ve become such a hermit,” he said. “I have virtually no contact with people, so I haven’t gotten around to it. I don’t see any particular need. I’m biding my time.”

Although Americans over 65 remain the demographic most likely to have received the original series of vaccinations, at 92 percent, their interest in keeping their vaccinations up-to-date is steadily declining, data from the C.D.C. shows. To date, about 71 percent have received the first recommended booster, but only about 44 percent have received the second.

Younger people have also been less likely to receive boosters than the original vaccinations, and only about one-third of people of all ages have received any booster, The New York Times vaccine tracker indicates. But seniors, who constitute 16 percent of the population, are more vulnerable to the virus’s effects, accounting for three-quarters of the nation’s 1.1 million deaths.

“From the beginning, older people have felt the virus was more of a threat to their safety and health and have been among the earliest adopters of the vaccine and the first round of boosters,” said Mollyann Brodie, the executive director of public opinion at Kaiser Family Foundation, which has been tracking vaccination rates and attitudes.

Now Kaiser’s most recent [vaccine monitor survey](#), published last month, has found that only 8 percent of seniors said they had received the updated bivalent booster, and 37 percent said they intended to “as soon as possible.” As a group, older adults were better informed than younger respondents, but almost 40 percent said they had heard little or nothing about the updated bivalent vaccine, and many were unsure whether the C.D.C. had recommended it for them.

([Currently the C.D.C. recommends](#) that individuals over age 5 receive the bivalent vaccine, which is effective against the original strain of Covid-19 and the Omicron variant, if two months have passed since their most recent vaccination or booster.)

“The messaging on boosters has been very muddled,” said Anne N. Sosin, a public health researcher at the Rockefeller Center for Public Policy and the Social Sciences at Dartmouth College. Partly as a result, she added, “older people are entering the winter with less protection than at earlier points in the pandemic.”

Ms. Sosin and other experts noted that older Americans have several reasons to be on guard. Their immunity from previous vaccinations and boosters may have waned; mitigation policies like mandatory masking and vaccination have largely disappeared; and public testing and vaccination sites have shut down.

Early on, Ms. Sosin said, many older adults changed their behavior by staying at home or masking and testing when they went out. Now they face greater exposure because “they’ve resumed their prepandemic activities.”

“Many are no longer concerned about Covid,” she said.

[Public opinion polls](#) bear that out. Older adults may also reason that improved treatments for Covid infections make the virus less dangerous.

Yet [deaths in this age group doubled](#) from April to July, exceeding 11,000 in both July and August, largely because of the increased transmissibility of the Omicron variant. Deaths began dipping again last month.

For older people, the danger of Covid is “reduced, but it’s not gone,” said William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. “You can’t forget it. You can’t put it in the rearview mirror.”

Two factors make older people more vulnerable to the virus. “Their immune systems become weaker with advancing age,” Dr. Schaffner said. “And they accumulate underlying conditions,” including heart and lung disease, smoking histories, diabetes and obesity, that increase their risks.

“Should you become infected, you’re at risk for a more serious outcome,” he said. “All the more reason to protect yourself as best you can.”

Studies have shown that vaccination and boosters [protect against serious illness, hospitalization and death](#), although that immunity ebbs over time. “The data are rock-solid,” Dr. Schaffner said.

The Department of Health and Human Services estimated this month that among seniors and other Medicare beneficiaries, [vaccination and boosters resulted in 650,000 fewer hospitalizations](#) for Covid and had saved 300,000 lives in 2021.

But even in nursing homes, where the early months of the pandemic had a devastating toll, the booster uptake “has been very stagnant,” said Priya Chidambaram, a senior policy analyst at Kaiser Family Foundation and co-author of [a survey](#) published this month.

As of September, an average of 74 percent of nursing home residents had received one or more boosters, but that figure ranged from 59 percent in Arizona to 92 percent in Vermont. Rates were far lower among nursing home staff; nationally, only about half had received a booster, and in Missouri, Alabama and Mississippi, only one-third had.

A federal mandate requiring nursing home staff members to be vaccinated remains in place, but it does not include boosters. A federal [on-site vaccination campaign](#) for residents that relied on CVS and Walgreens bringing vaccines to nursing homes was effective but has not been repeated for boosters.

“That push sort of died down,” Ms. Chidambaram said. “The federal government took its foot off the pedal.”

Some older adults who do not live in nursing homes may be homebound or have difficulty traveling to pharmacies. But their sense of urgency also appears to have diminished. “Most older people were vaccinated,” Ms. Sosin said. “They weren’t hesitant or opposed.” But when it comes to boosters, she said, “they’re not very motivated and they haven’t been given a reason to be. There’s more a sense of, ‘Why bother?’”

A number of public health experts are now urging a full-scale crusade — including mass-media campaigns; social media and digital communication; pop-up and drive-through sites; mobile vans; and home visits — to raise the vaccination rate among seniors, and everyone else, before a possible winter surge of the virus.

“We have never seen an all-hands-on-deck approach to booster delivery,” Ms. Sosin said. “We should be flooding people with information, to the point where it gets irritating.”

The [Biden administration’s fall Covid plan](#), announced early last month, has incorporated many of these ideas. But Dr. Schaffner argued that it did not spell out details or take a sufficiently aggressive approach for nursing homes.

Ms. Sosin was similarly skeptical. “I’m not seeing the elements in the plan materialize,” she said. “They’re not reflected in the numbers we’re seeing,” she said in reference to the number of people getting boosters.

Individuals can play a role in this effort. [Kaiser surveys](#) have found that doctors and other health care professionals are trusted sources of information, and the older population is in frequent contact with them.

“If more providers recognized that four in 10 older adults don’t realize there’s a new booster and they should get it, that’s a lot of opportunity to make an impact,” Dr. Brodie said.

	<p>Family members, friends, co-workers and neighbors also influence health decisions and behavior, and Kaiser studies show that they can help increase vaccination rates.</p> <p>For those on the fence, Dr. Brodie said, “asking or reminding your parent or grandparent about the new booster can make quite a difference.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 ‘Tripledemic’? Flu, infections amid Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/health/flu-covid-risk.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/health/flu-covid-risk.html</a>
GIST	<p>For more than two years, shuttered schools and offices, social distancing and masks granted Americans a reprieve from flu and most other respiratory infections. This winter is likely to be different.</p> <p>With few to no restrictions in place and travel and socializing back in full swing, an expected winter rise in Covid cases appears poised to collide with a resurgent influenza season, causing a “twindemic” — or even a “tripleddemic,” with a third pathogen, respiratory syncytial virus, or R.S.V., in the mix.</p> <p>Cases of flu have begun to tick up earlier than usual, and are expected to soar over the coming weeks. Children infected with R.S.V. (which has similar symptoms to flu and Covid), rhinoviruses and enteroviruses are already <a href="#">straining</a> pediatric hospitals in <a href="#">several states</a>.</p> <p>“We’re seeing everything come back with a vengeance,” said Dr. Alpana Waghmare, an infectious diseases expert at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center and a physician at Seattle Children’s Hospital.</p> <p>Most cases of Covid, flu and R.S.V. are likely to be mild, but together they may sicken millions of Americans and swamp hospitals, public health experts warned.</p> <p>“You’ve got this waning Covid immunity, coinciding with the impact of the flu coming along here, and R.S.V.,” said Andrew Read, an evolutionary microbiologist at Penn State University. “We’re in uncharted territory here.”</p> <p>The vaccines for Covid and flu, while they may not prevent infection, still offer the best protection against severe illness and death, experts said. They urged everyone, and especially those at high risk, to get their shots as soon as possible.</p> <p>Older adults, immunocompromised people and pregnant women are most at risk, and young children are highly susceptible to influenza and R.S.V. Many infected children are becoming severely ill because they have little immunity, either because it has waned or because they were not exposed to these viruses before the pandemic.</p> <p>R.S.V. causes about 14,000 deaths among adults 65 and older and up to 300 deaths among children under 5 each year. No vaccine is available, but at least two candidates are in <a href="#">late-stage clinical trials</a> and appear to be <a href="#">highly effective</a> in older adults. Pfizer is also developing an <a href="#">antiviral drug</a>.</p> <p>“As of today, we are seeing equal numbers of Covid, flu and R.S.V. and that’s really concerning because we are very early for flu and R.S.V. activity,” said Dr. Diego Hijano, a pediatric infectious disease specialist at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital.</p> <p>“It’s going to be a rough winter,” he said.</p> <p><b>Another Covid wave?</b></p> <p>Coronavirus cases are low, but are beginning to rise in some parts of the country. Several European countries, including France, Germany and Britain, are experiencing an uptick in hospitalizations and deaths, prompting experts to worry that the United States will follow suit, as it has with previous waves.</p>



Some of the coronavirus variants that are picking up momentum are [adept at dodging immunity](#) and drugs such as [Evusheld](#) and Bebtelovimab, which are especially important for protecting immunocompromised people.

People with weakened immune systems “remain at risk even despite getting all of the recommended or even additional doses of vaccine,” Dr. Waghmare said.

Public health experts are particularly concerned about a constellation of Omicron variants that seem to dodge immunity from the vaccines and even from recent infection better than previous variants did.

The latest booster vaccines made by Pfizer and Moderna were designed for the variants that dominated this summer but not for these newer variants. Still, they raise antibody levels overall, and should help stave off severe symptoms and abridge the duration of illness, said Aubree Gordon, an epidemiologist at the University of Michigan.

The BA.5 variant was the most immune evasive variant until recently, but it is rapidly being replaced by others, including two that show an even greater ability to sidestep immunity.

One of them, known as BQ.1.1, is the leading candidate for causing a winter wave, and it has already sent cases soaring in Europe. Although it and a closely related variant called BQ.1 together account for only about 11 percent of cases in the United States, their share has [grown rapidly](#) from just 3 percent two weeks ago.

A combination of two Omicron subvariants called XBB has been fueling a wave of cases in Singapore, among the most highly vaccinated nations in the world. Its subvariant XBB.1 has just arrived in the United States. Another variant, called BA.2.75.2, is also highly [immune evasive](#) and causes [more severe disease](#), but is so far responsible for less than 2 percent of cases nationwide.

Most of the other variants don’t appear to cause more severe symptoms than earlier versions of the virus, but the trend toward immune evasiveness is likely to continue, experts said.

“Now things have shifted with the massive degree of immunity that people have against previous variants,” said Cornelius Roemer, a computational biologist in Richard Neher’s group at the University of Basel.

The Food and Drug Administration has [authorized boosters](#) designed for BA.5 for all Americans 5 and older, but so far, only a [small fraction of people](#) who qualify for a shot [have received one](#). Fewer than one in three children ages 5 to 11 has completed even the primary series of Covid vaccines.

That may change as people see a rapid rise in cases, Dr. Gordon said.

### **Signs of a bad flu season**

Before the coronavirus walloped the world, flu viruses sickened millions each winter, and killed tens of thousands of Americans. In the [2018-2019 season](#), the flu was responsible for 13 million medical visits, 380,000 hospitalizations and 28,000 deaths.

Flu season in the southern hemisphere, typically between May and October, is highly predictive of winters in the northern hemisphere. This year, flu began weeks earlier than usual in [Australia](#) and New Zealand, and the number of cases and hospitalizations were markedly higher.

Dr. Gordon tracks influenza rates among children in Nicaragua, which has one flu season in June and July, and a larger one in the late fall. More than 90 percent of the population was considered fully vaccinated against Covid by January 2022, and many people had also gained immunity from one or more infections.



Still, the country saw high rates of both Covid and influenza in the first half of this year. Influenza rates among children were [higher](#) than in the 2009 flu pandemic, and the children were sicker on average than in previous years. “We saw a lot of hospitalizations,” Dr. Gordon said.

In the United States, flu typically begins to pick up in October and runs through March, peaking sometime between December and February. But in some states, this year’s season is already underway.

About 3 percent of tests nationwide were [turning up positive](#) for flu as of Oct. 8, according to the C.D.C., but the rates are higher than 10 percent in some Southeastern states and higher than 5 percent in the South Central region. In Texas, the proportion of tests positive for flu [jumped to](#) 5.3 percent in early October from 3.7 percent the week before.

Some southern states are also reporting a rise in the [use of ventilators](#). In New York, health officials declared early this month that flu was [already widespread](#) in the state.

Public health experts urged Americans, especially those at high risk, to get a flu shot before cases rise much higher. Like the Covid vaccines, the flu vaccine may not be a perfect match for the circulating variant, but even so, it roughly [halves the risk](#) of hospitalization in both children [and adults](#).

Antibodies kick in roughly two weeks after a shot, so a vaccine now may in fact extend protection through the winter wave better than one received in September.

Last year, flu vaccination rates decreased slightly in all age groups compared with the previous year, according to an analysis by the C.D.C. The vaccination rate for children 6 months to 4 years of age, who are at high risk, showed the biggest drop — to 67 percent from 75 percent before the arrival of the coronavirus.

The lower rate may be because mistrust of Covid vaccines has spilled over to those for the flu, or simply because parents have forgotten the danger flu poses to young children. It is too soon to tell whether the numbers will improve this year.

Older adults and immunocompromised people should get both Covid and flu shots, public health experts said. Healthy young adults may also want to opt for both vaccines if they don’t want to get sick or cannot afford to miss work, or to protect others around them who are at higher risk.

Some communities are at increased risk of severe illness and hospitalization for flu. During flu seasons from 2009 to 2022, rates of hospitalization were 80 percent higher among Black adults, 30 percent higher among American Indian/Alaska Native adults and 20 percent higher among Hispanic adults compared with white adults, according to a C.D.C. report released this week.

Yet flu vaccination rates were much lower in these groups. Vaccine coverage also declined by about 9 percentage points from the previous year [in pregnant](#) women across all racial and ethnic groups.

In February 2020, Dr. Gordon was preparing to talk to her 7-year-old daughter’s class about the coronavirus when a boy in the class died of an infection with influenza B virus.

“Most of the time it doesn’t make you very sick, but sometimes it can,” Dr. Gordon said of the flu. “We do have an effective vaccine against influenza, so I’d encourage people to go get vaccinated.”

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HEADLINE	10/22 Pandemic change personality? Possibly
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/health/covid-impact-personality-change.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/health/covid-impact-personality-change.html</a>
GIST	Whether it was attending school lectures, making memorable first impressions at that first office job or packing the floor at a concert, many of the social rituals that had been rites of passage for young people were disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic.

That has left people like Thuan Phung, a junior at the Parsons School of Design who lives in Hell's Kitchen in Manhattan, feeling "weird" about real-life interactions. After two years of virtual instruction, he is back in the classroom.

"On Zoom you can mute," Mr. Phung, 25, said. "It took me a while to know how to talk to people."

Now, a recent study of people's personalities suggests that the discomfort he's feeling is not uncommon for people in his generation, who were forced into the isolation of pandemic restrictions in their 20s, already a time of [social anxiety](#) for many of them.

Covid has not only reshaped the way we work and connect with others, but has also redrawn the way we are, according to the study, which found some of the most pronounced effects among young adults.

Our key personality traits may have dimmed so that we have become less extroverted and creative, not as agreeable and less conscientious, according to [the study](#), published last month in the journal PLOS ONE.

These declines amounted to "about one decade of normative personality change," the study said. People under 30 years old exhibited "disrupted maturity." That change is the opposite of how a young adult's personality normally develops over time, the study's authors wrote.

"If these changes are enduring, this evidence suggests population-wide stressful events can slightly bend the trajectory of personality, especially in younger adults," the study said.

The authors of the personality study relied on data from the [Understanding America Study](#), an ongoing internet panel at the University of Southern California that first began collecting survey answers in 2014, drawing upon publicly available data from about 7,000 participants who responded to a personality assessment administered before and during the pandemic.

Angelina Sutin, the paper's lead author and a [professor at Florida State University](#), said the study results showed that on average, personality was altered during the pandemic, though she emphasized that the findings captured "one snapshot in time" and could be temporary.

"Personality tends to be pretty resistant to change. It might take something like a global pandemic," Dr. Sutin said. "But it is hard to pinpoint exactly what it was about the pandemic that led to these changes."

Dr. Sutin and her co-authors also don't know if those personality changes will persist.

The researchers analyzed five dimensions of personality: neuroticism, one's tolerance of stress and negative emotions; openness, defined as unconventionality and creativity; extroversion, or how outgoing a person is; agreeableness, or being "trusting and straightforward"; and conscientiousness, how responsible and organized a person is.

Gerald Clore, a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of Virginia, said the authors were "appropriately cautious" in their conclusions and on emphasizing the need for further study to re-examine the findings.

The pandemic itself was a "hell of an experiment," said Dr. Clore, theorizing that it may have been the restructuring of routines instead of overall stress that reshaped people's personalities.

Perhaps echoing the changes, interest in psychotherapy soared throughout the pandemic, several therapists said. Virtual therapy has also boomed.

At Talkspace, a platform that offers therapy online, the number of individual active users rose 60 percent from March 2020 to a year later, said John Kim, a spokesman for the company.

The number of teens seeking therapy at BetterHelp grew nearly fourfold since 2019, a spokeswoman for the online therapy company said.

Therapists practicing in the United States say they have observed their clients struggling with navigating the confines of pandemic living and dealing with the vicissitudes of social norms.

Nedra Glover Tawwab, a therapist based in Charlotte, N.C., with a private practice and an Instagram following of more than a million, said that she noticed escalating discomfort as people slowly reintegrated into past routines, such as working in an office.

“We have grown so accustomed to isolating that we now think we love it,” Ms. Glover Tawwab said. “But is that really who you are? Or is that what you had to accept during that time?”

Some people have coped with the amplified stress, exhaustion and frustration of the period by finding a new outlet: screaming outside with others. The trend has been attracting participants for more than a year.

Sarah Harmon, a therapist in Boston, organized her first primal scream event in March 2022 to let go of feelings that she said she was exploding with.

“The pandemic didn’t give us anything; it didn’t allow any of that deflating, any of that recharging,” Ms. Harmon said.

She said the proliferation and popularity of those scream events underscored how people had unmet needs and few ways to process or release pent-up feelings like rage.

Since April, Heather Dinn, of Zionsville, Ind., has been hosting monthly group screams on a local soccer field. She said the scream was an opportunity for people who had bottled up frustrations to clear an “overflowing” emotional load before they erupted.

“When we let it all get stuck in there, it just sits there and it’s not going anywhere,” Ms. Dinn, a health and lifestyle coach, said.

Delta Hunter, a therapist in New York City who facilitates a social-anxiety therapy group, said that the pandemic “compounded” existing anxiety.

“People want to connect and process together and we weren’t able to do any of that,” Ms. Hunter said. “People felt really lost because of that.”

Younger adults, and especially teens, have faced greater restrictions on activities and experiences typical of adolescence and youth, Ms. Sutin’s study concluded. It found that individuals under 30 exhibited the sharpest drops in conscientiousness and agreeableness.

“When your whole world goes into the virtual space, you lose that training ground for being able to be more conscientious,” Ms. Harmon said, adding that she saw a lot of social anxiety in younger generations, perhaps because they had not accumulated as many in-person experiences and coping skills.

Several months ago, Anviksha Kalscheur’s practice in Chicago established a teen support program to help young people address feelings of disconnect and isolation.

The teenagers have expressed an overall negative outlook toward the future and heightened social anxiety, she said. The therapists picked up on a “little bit of a dark cloud” in their clients’ outlook when it came to perceiving the uncertainty of the years ahead, Ms. Kalscheur said.

Connection, attachment and interaction with others are critical to developing personality, Ms. Kalscheur said, adding that identity and personality are still being formed in younger teens.

	<p>“You’re at that stage of development, where they’re not getting those cues, those attachments, those learning, like all those different pieces that happen that you don’t even often think about,” she said. “So of course, your environment has such a huge impact and in that particular time frame.”</p> <p>How long the changes of the pandemic period will last remains an open question, the study’s authors said.</p> <p>Therapists like Ms. Glover Tawwab said the transition period into in-person life after the worst of the crisis could present an opportunity to reintegrate slowly and to reconnect with people and experiences more intentionally.</p> <p>“This is a wonderful time to really observe what things you miss, and what things you enjoy being away from,” she said. “So we have this time now to create what we really want.”</p> <p>Grace Wilentz, a 37-year-old poet who lives in Dublin, said that the pandemic’s silver lining for her has been gaining greater self-awareness that has caused her to rekindle lapsed friendships. She has been taking time to reconnect with old friends over workday lunches.</p> <p>“I was expecting that those relationships would be kind of hard to revive,” she said. “In a certain way, they’re kind of richer and more solid.”</p> <p>Positive transformation is possible in times of uncertainty, Ms. Kalscheur said.</p> <p>“Sometimes, like, it takes a real breakdown in our social, cultural, even our mental health norms to transform into something that’s better,” she said. “It’s almost like you break down to rebuild back up.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Russia deliberately slowing grain exports?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/23/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#zelensky-putin-russia-ukraine-grain">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/23/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#zelensky-putin-russia-ukraine-grain</a>
GIST	<p>President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has accused Russia of deliberately slowing down grain exports to create a food crisis, undermining a deal the United Nations brokered earlier this year that freed millions of tons of food trapped in Ukraine’s ports by the war.</p> <p>Mr. Zelensky, in his nightly address to the nation on Friday, said there was a backlog of 150 ships waiting to fulfill contracts to transport Ukrainian wheat, corn, sunflower oil and other products.</p> <p>“This is an artificial queue,” he said. “It arose only because Russia is deliberately delaying the passage of ships.” He said the slowdowns had resulted in Ukraine exporting three million tons less of its agricultural products than it would have.</p> <p>“The enemy is doing everything to slow down our food exports,” he said. “I believe that with these actions, Russia is deliberately inciting the food crisis so that it becomes as acute as it was in the first half of the year.”</p> <p>There was no immediate public response from the Kremlin to Mr. Zelensky’s allegations.</p> <p>Ismeni Palla, a spokeswoman for the U.N. entity overseeing the agreement, known as the Black Sea Grain Initiative, confirmed that 150 vessels were “waiting to move,” delays she said had “the potential to cause disruptions” in the flow of goods.</p> <p>She declined to comment on what was causing the delays. She said the Joint Coordination Centre — a team of officials from Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations that monitors the ships — “has acknowledged this problem and is trying to address the backlog.”</p>

The deal allowing Ukrainian grain exports to resume through the Black Sea was brokered with Russia and Ukraine by the United Nations and Turkey in July. The agreement must be renegotiated over the next month, and its future is uncertain.

Under the pact, Ukrainian pilots guide ships through Ukrainian minefields around the ports, and are then given safe passage by the Russian Navy to Turkey, where teams involving all the parties inspect them before they head to delivery ports. Returning ships are also inspected for arms.

U.N. officials have called the deal a success. The secretary general, António Guterres, has credited the shipments with driving down world food prices and averting a global hunger crisis.

As of Oct. 19, almost 8.8 million tons of grain and other foodstuffs had been exported under the agreement, according to a report [issued on Thursday](#) by the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development. Nearly 20 percent of the wheat exports have gone to developing countries, the report said, though that amounts to about 1.3 million tons less than in 2021.

The report said that Ukraine's shipments are still about half of what they were before the war. It added that the prices of global food staples had declined since the agreement was signed, but that the prices of some commodities, including wheat and maize, had begun to rise again because of the uncertainty of the deal's renewal.

Russia and Ukraine have yet to agree on extending the agreement, which is set to expire at the end of November.

Ukraine has said it wants the deal extended, but Russia earlier this week [threatened to block its extension](#) unless promises from the West to facilitate more shipments of Russian food and fertilizer were honored.

As part of the deal, the United States and the European Union [gave assurances](#) that banks and companies involved in trading Russian grain and fertilizer would be exempt from economic sanctions on Russia.

"The situation around the export grain initiative is becoming more and more tense these weeks," Mr. Zelensky said on Friday.

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HEADLINE	10/23 Iran slams calls for probe into drones
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/23/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#iran-slams-calls-for-investigation-into-drone-deals-with-russia">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/23/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#iran-slams-calls-for-investigation-into-drone-deals-with-russia</a>
GIST	<p>Tehran denounced on Saturday a call from European countries for the United Nations Security Council to investigate accusations that it provided Russia with drones — a violation of its nuclear deal — to strike battlefields and civilian targets in Ukraine.</p> <p>Calling claims that Russia has used Iranian-made drones in attacking Ukraine “baseless and unsubstantiated,” Tehran condemned the new round of <a href="#">sanctions imposed by Britain and the European Union</a> last week that targeted the company that manufactures Shahed-136 drones, as well as three Iranian generals.</p> <p>“The Islamic Republic of Iran regards the current provocative approaches by the European Union and Britain as part of a targeted political scenario, which is in contrast to their absurd and hypocritical claims of helping establish lasting peace and stability in the world,” a spokesman for Iran’s foreign ministry, Nasser Kanaani, said on <a href="#">its website</a>.</p> <p>Mr. Kanaani spoke a day after France, Germany and Britain asked the U.N. to investigate whether Iran had violated a Security Council resolution endorsing <a href="#">the 2015 accord</a>, brokered among six world powers led by</p>

	<p>the United States, that granted relief on oil and financial sanctions in exchange for curbs on Tehran's nuclear program.</p> <p>Iranian drones have been used on civilian targets and have killed dozens of people, <a href="#">including during strikes in Kyiv</a>, the capital of Ukraine. They have also been used as part of Russia's intensified efforts to take down Ukraine's electrical grid in strikes on power plants around the country.</p> <p>Iran has denied sending drones to Russia or deploying trainers to Ukraine, and Moscow has denied using Iranian drones to attack civilians.</p> <p>American officials say that Iran not only has provided Russia with dozens of self-destructing drones, but has also sent Iranian trainers to Crimea to help Russian pilots learn to use them after early failures.</p> <p>John F. Kirby, a National Security Council official, said this week that Tehran was directly engaged in the drone campaign that had killed civilians and destroyed power facilities in Ukraine.</p> <p>"There is extensive proof of their use by Russia against both military and civilian targets there," Mr. Kirby said. "Yet both Iran and Russia continue to lie about it."</p> <p>President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine told CTV and CBC in an interview that he did not believe the denials from the Iranian leadership.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Kherson officials urge residents to flee</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/23/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#civilians-urged-to-leave-immediately-as-fight-for-key-city-looms">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/23/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#civilians-urged-to-leave-immediately-as-fight-for-key-city-looms</a>
GIST	<p>Russian-installed officials urged all residents in the southern city of Kherson to "leave immediately" on Saturday as Ukrainian troops continued to advance, a sign of Moscow's shaky hold on the strategic city.</p> <p>The pro-Moscow regional administration strongly urged civilians to use boats to cross the Dnipro River and move farther into Russian-held territory because of "the increased danger of massive shelling of the city and the threat of terrorist attacks."</p> <p>Last week, the occupation authorities in Kherson said they were launching an operation to evacuate thousands of civilians to the river's east bank. Kyiv has described the relocation effort as "a propaganda show" designed to scare civilians with claims that Ukraine would shell the city.</p> <p>Kherson, which sits on the west bank of the river, was captured by Russia early in the eight-month-long war. It is a major industrial port city, the capital of the one of the four regions Russia has illegally annexed and the only major city west of the Dnipro that Moscow holds.</p> <p>For weeks, Ukrainian forces have been inching toward Kherson, village by village, taking back parts of the region. They have also bombed the main road bridges close to the city, making it harder for Moscow to resupply its troops.</p> <p>Vladimir Saldo, the Russian-installed governor, said this week, as he urged civilians to evacuate from the town, that Russian forces have been digging in and erecting "large-scale defensive" fortifications. The Ukrainian military also reported that up to 2,000 Russian reinforcements had been poured into the fight.</p> <p>But there were also signs the Russians might be considering a tactical retreat across the Dnipro River. Vladyslav Nazarov, a spokesman for Ukraine's southern operational command, said on Friday that Russia's forces in Kherson were "quite actively transferring equipment, weapons and even units" to the eastern bank. That claim could not be independently verified.</p>

	<p>Local pro-Russia officials have for days been sharing videos and photographs of civilians lining up to cross the mile-wide river in ferry boats. They said on Thursday that 15,000 civilians had already left.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military general staff said in a statement on Saturday that there were reports of looting and car theft in Kherson as the people frantically tried to leave town.</p> <p>Those claims also could not be independently verified, and there was no independent confirmation that a mass evacuation had been taking place.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 China Xi 'silence' speaks volumes on future</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-congress-security.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-congress-security.html</a>
GIST	<p>As China's leader, Xi Jinping, laid out his priorities this week for a breakthrough third term in power, officials parsed his words for signs of where the country was headed. What he did not say was as revealing.</p> <p>The omission of two phrases from his key report to a Communist Party congress exposed his anxieties about an increasingly volatile world where Washington is contesting China's ascent as an authoritarian superpower.</p> <p>For two decades, successive Chinese leaders have declared at the congress that the country was in a "period of important strategic opportunity," implying that China faced no imminent risk of major conflict and could focus more on economic growth.</p> <p>For even longer, leaders have said that "<a href="#">peace and development remain</a> the themes of the era," suggesting that whatever may be going wrong in the world, the grand trends were on China's side.</p> <p>But the two slogans, so unvarying that they rarely drew attention, were not in Mr. Xi's report to the congress, which began last Sunday and ended Saturday. Not in his 104-minute speech summarizing the report. Nor in the 72-page Chinese full version given to officials and journalists.</p> <p>Their exclusion, and Mr. Xi's somber warning of "dangerous storms" on the horizon, indicated that he believed international hazards have worsened, especially since the start of the war in Ukraine in February, several experts said. Mr. Xi, who is nearly assured re-election on Sunday as its general secretary, sees a world made more treacherous by American support for the disputed island of Taiwan, Chinese vulnerability to technology "choke points," and the plans of Western-led alliances to increase their military presence around Asia.</p> <p>"China's external environment now can be described as unprecedentedly perilous, and that's also the judgment of China's high echelon," Hu Wei, a foreign policy scholar in Shanghai, said in an interview.</p> <p>In the Communist Party, the leader's words matter enormously, shaping China's policies, legislation and diplomacy. And the report to the party congress, every five years, is the fundamental guide for officials. Each phrase, each tweak, each omission is weighed to signal priorities.</p> <p>In his report, Mr. Xi said several times that China intended to contribute more to global peace and development through its own initiatives, and discussed "strategic opportunities" for trade and diplomatic gains. But his assessment of global trends was laced with warnings.</p> <p>"Our country has entered a period when strategic opportunity coexists with risks and challenges, and uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising," Mr. Xi said. Although China has room for international growth and initiative, he added, "the world has entered a period of turbulence and transformation."</p>



“This marks a meaningful, and perhaps major, shift in their assessment of the global order,” said [Christopher K. Johnson](#), the president of the China Strategies Group and a former C.I.A. analyst of Chinese politics. “He’s basically hardening the system because the likelihood of conflict is going up.”

During the congress, Mr. Xi did not publicly mention the United States, nor President Biden’s new national security strategy that describes China as the pre-eminent threat to American primacy. But to Chinese officials, the implied focus will be clear.

“Daring to struggle” was a hallmark of Chinese diplomacy, a vice foreign minister, Ma Zhaoxu, told reporters covering the congress, noting Beijing’s contention with overbearing, “hegemonic” rivals. Jiang Jinquan, a senior aide to Mr. Xi, told a Beijing newspaper that China had “vigorously and effectively” taken on “hostile Western forces.”

Mr. Xi’s warnings have also reflected his underlying political message to the congress: I told you so.

He has positioned himself as the prophetic statesman who in his decade-long rule beat back proliferating threats to China’s rise while overhauling its fractured military and security forces. He has been the leader who toughened up China’s diplomacy, foreseeing that jealous rival powers would try to, as he said in his report, “blackmail, contain, blockade and exert maximum pressure on China.”

The party is promoting Mr. Xi as the nation’s “navigator” for the intensifying threats. The outcome of the congress on Saturday made clear that Mr. Xi will stay in power beyond the 10 years his predecessor served, and also install a new leadership team dominated by his firm allies.

That new team, to be unveiled on Sunday, is likely to elevate officials whom Mr. Xi believes will serve his call to “struggle,” by their loyalty to him and the party, and their ability to advance programs to upgrade high-tech, military modernization and social controls.

Already, People’s Liberation Army commanders and senior officials at the congress have urged China to rally around Mr. Xi’s plans to upgrade the military, accelerate technological self-reliance and strengthen ideological indoctrination to ward off subversive ideas among the young.

Mr. Xi had “carried out a historic rescue, reshaping and transformation” of the People’s Liberation Army forces, Gen. Xu Qiliang [told military delegates at the congress](#). “In all actions, absolutely obey the command of Chairman Xi,” he said, using Mr. Xi’s title as head of the military.

In his report, Mr. Xi laid out some of his plans to secure China’s global rise, many building on current policy directions.

He called for accelerating steps to become more self-reliant in core technologies and pressing ahead with military modernization, including, Mr. Xi hinted, upgrading China’s relatively limited nuclear weapons abilities.

Beijing, he said, would also become more active in international affairs and promote its own solutions for global security and development challenges. He repeated that China wanted to win control of Taiwan peacefully, but could use force if compelled.

Mr. Xi’s new phrases had signaled that China must become more nimble, [Wang Wen](#), the executive dean of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies in Beijing, said in written responses to questions.

“We can’t just passively sit back and enjoy a ‘period’ of strategic opportunity,” he said, “and have to actively shape and seize more opportunities.”

Mr. Xi’s report also represented another step in jettisoning language and assumptions from China’s era of market changes and friendly diplomacy with the West.

The phrase that “peace and development” were era-defining themes took hold in the 1980s, when Deng Xiaoping’s generation of leaders introduced economic liberalization and fostered ties with Washington, Tokyo and other former foes, said [Yong Deng](#), a political science professor at the U.S. Naval Academy who wrote “China’s Strategic Opportunity.”

It implied that China “had the permissible international environment to focus on modernizations through reforms and opening,” he said, noting that he did not speak for the navy.

Another leader, Jiang Zemin, first [declared in 2002](#) that China could enjoy about two decades of “strategic opportunity” — free of serious risk of major conflict — soon after he had won its entry into the World Trade Organization. It was a time of expanding commerce and hopes abroad that China would increasingly liberalize, in politics as well as business. Beijing encouraged talk of China’s “peaceful rise.”

Even later last year, Mr. Xi and other senior officials [stuck to the formula](#) that China was still in a time of [strategic opportunity](#), while expressing apprehension about geopolitical and economic risks. The two slogans [appeared in a textbook](#) issued to officials in April, reflecting contents of Mr. Xi’s secret national security strategy. In late August, the party’s leading doctrinal journal published a [speech that Mr. Xi made in 2020](#) that hinted at internal debate.

“Now and for some time to come, our country is still in a period of important strategic opportunity,” Mr. Xi said then. “Today, 20 years on, how we assess this period of strategic opportunity is a major issue.”

Mr. Xi’s worries about external risks appeared to come to head in the first half of 2022, after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and NATO’s galvanization to support Kyiv, an examination of Chinese officials’ speeches and policy documents indicates.

The war in Ukraine, global tensions over the coronavirus pandemic and Washington’s tough approach to Beijing intensified debate in China about whether it still had a “period of strategic opportunity,” said Mr. Wang, who [recently published a paper](#) on the issue.

“The impact from Russia-Ukraine was that it was a rehearsal for U.S. containment of China,” Mr. Wang said in written answers to questions, reflecting a widespread view in China.

Mr. Xi flagged [in a speech in late July](#) that his views had significantly changed to prepare officials for the congress. China still has many opportunities for growth, he said, but he also noted the “dangers and challenges” ahead.

“While some of China’s responses to growing challenges were no doubt already underway before the congress,” said David Gitter, the president of the [Center for Advanced China Research](#), “the dropping of the terms noted will inject new impetus and assertiveness in a way visible from outside China.”

Mr. Xi’s draft report to the congress was endorsed by its nearly 2,400 delegates on Saturday, but the finalized version was not immediately released. There is still some chance that the reassuring stock phrases will be restored in the final version. But making that change now could signify elite discord over a major issue, something that Mr. Xi would not welcome.

The congress issued a concluding statement praising Mr. Xi’s government for, among other things, leading China in “effectively responding to grave and complicated international circumstances, and massive risks and challenges that have followed hard on the heels of each other.”

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HEADLINE	10/22 Berlin 80,000 march: support Iran protesters
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-guards-warn-cleric-over-agitating-restive-southeast-2022-10-22/">https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/irans-guards-warn-cleric-over-agitating-restive-southeast-2022-10-22/</a>

BERLIN/DUBAI, Oct 22 (Reuters) - Tens of thousands of people marched in Berlin on Saturday in a show of support for protesters in Iran where unrest ignited by Mahsa Amini's death in police custody entered a sixth week despite a deadly state crackdown.

The protests have posed one of the boldest challenges to Iran's clerical leadership since the 1979 revolution, even if they do not appear close to toppling a government that has deployed its powerful security apparatus to quell the unrest.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, died in the custody of morality police after being detained for "improper attire". Protests erupted at her funeral on Sept. 17 in the Kurdish town of Saez before spreading across Iran. Rights groups say more than 200 people have been killed in the crackdown.

Women have played a prominent part, waving and burning veils. The deaths of several teenaged girls reportedly killed during protests have fuelled more anger.

In Berlin, police estimated 80,000 people joined the march, with protesters waving Iranian flags and holding banners saying "Woman, Life, Freedom". Organisers said Iranians had travelled from the United States, Canada and all over the European Union.

"From Zahedan to Tehran, I sacrifice my life for Iran," human rights activist Fariba Balouch said after giving a speech at the Berlin gathering, referring to Iranian cities swept up in the protests. The crowd responded with "Death to Khamenei", referring to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Anti-government activists said the Berlin march was the largest ever demonstration against the Islamic Republic by Iranians abroad.

"I feel very good, because we are here to (say) 'We are with you, with all Iranian people'. I am Mahsa Amini's voice," said a protester who gave her name as Maru.

Videos posted on social media - which Reuters could not independently verify - showed protests continuing in Iran at several cities including Tehran, northeastern Mashhad, northwestern Mahabad, Dezful in the southwest and a number of universities across the country.

Videos showed protesters chanting in Tehran's western Sadeghieh neighbourhood and lighting fires in the streets of the capital's Lalehzar district. Another showed cars in Mashhad honking their horns and demonstrators chanting "Death to the dictator".

Social media videos said to be from Dezful showed youths chanting "Freedom, freedom, freedom" as they confronted police in the predominantly ethnic Arab, oil-rich province of Khuzestan on the Iraqi border.

#### 'THE LAST WARNING'

Khamenei has warned nobody should dare think they can uproot the Islamic Republic, accusing its adversaries of fomenting the unrest. State TV has reported the deaths of at least 26 members of the security forces.

Some of the deadliest unrest has been in areas home to [ethnic minorities](#) with long-standing grievances against the state. These include the Sistan-Baluchistan province in the southeast and its provincial capital Zahedan.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Saturday accused a leading Sunni cleric of agitating against the Islamic Republic and warned it may cost him dearly after he held officials including Khamenei responsible for dozens killed in Zahedan last month.

Amnesty International has said security forces killed [at least 66 people](#) in a crackdown after Friday prayers in Zahedan, on Sept. 30.

Molavi Abdolhamid, Zahedan's leading Sunni cleric, said [during his Friday sermon](#) that officials including Khamenei, head of the Shi'ite-dominated state, were "responsible before God" for the Sept. 30 killings. He described the killing as a massacre, saying bullets had been fired at heads and chests.

A short statement on Sepah News, the Revolutionary Guards' official news site, said: "Mr. Abdolhamid, encouraging and agitating youths against the sacred Islamic Republic of Iran may cost you dearly! This is the last warning!"

State media said at the time of the Sept. 30 violence that "unidentified armed individuals" opened fire on a police station, prompting security forces to return fire.

The Revolutionary Guards said five members of its forces and the volunteer Basij militia were killed during the Sept. 30 violence. Authorities blamed a Baluchi militant group. Neither that group nor any other faction claimed a role.

Protests had been fuelled by allegations of the rape of a local teenaged girl by a police officer. Officials have said the case was being investigated.

After [protests erupted in Zahedan](#) again on Friday, deputy interior minister for security, Majid Mir Ahmadi, said calm had returned, official news agency IRNA reported.

He said 150 "thugs attacked public property and even those shops belonging to Sunnis".

Rights groups say the government has long discriminated against ethnic minorities including the Kurds. The state denies accusations of discrimination.

In Iran's Kurdish region on Saturday, videos posted online showed shopkeepers on strike in several cities in the northwestern Kurdish region, including Sanandaj, Saez and Bukan.

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HEADLINE	10/23 New China's Communist Party leadership
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-new-elite-communist-party-leadership-2022-10-23/">https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-new-elite-communist-party-leadership-2022-10-23/</a> <a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/men-slated-lead-chinas-communist-party-91948512">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/men-slated-lead-chinas-communist-party-91948512</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING, Oct 23 (Reuters) - <a href="#">Xi Jinping</a> on Sunday secured a third term as leader of China's ruling Communist Party and unveiled a seven-member Politburo Standing Committee, which he heads, that will determine the path of the country's development in the next five years.</p> <p>Below are the personnel elected on Sunday by the Central Committee, the biggest of the party's top decision-making bodies, to the pinnacle of China's political power.</p> <p>Apart from Xi, the new Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) saw the return of two other members to the seven-person group - Zhao Leji and Wang Huning.</p> <p>Premier Li Keqiang, who had held the number two PSC position after the 2012 and 2017 party congresses, was not in the new PSC as expected, after exiting the bigger <a href="#">Central Committee</a> on Saturday.</p> <p>Replacing him is Li Qiang, party chief of Shanghai. Joining him in the PSC were Cai Qi, party chief of Beijing; Ding Xuexiang, effectively Xi's chief-of-staff; and Li Xi, party chief of Guangdong. The four men were in the 25-person Politburo formed after the 2017 congress.</p> <p>General Secretary of the Central Committee:</p> <p>Xi Jinping</p> <p>Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, or Politburo, of the Central Committee (seven members):</p>

Xi Jinping, 69

Li Qiang, 63

Zhao Leji, 65

Wang Huning, 67

Cai Qi, 66

Ding Xuexiang, 60

Li Xi, 66

The Politburo, the second-highest decision-making body in the party, shrank to 24 members from 25, with no woman in the group for the first time in years, as Vice Premier Sun Chunlan retired.

Also prominently dropped from the Politburo was Vice Premier Hu Chunhua, 59, who was previously considered a contender to become the next premier. Hu remains in the larger Central Committee.

Politburo of the Central Committee (24 members, including PSC members):

Wang Yi, 69, state councillor and foreign minister

Zhang Youxia, 72, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission

He Weidong, 65, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission

He Lifeng, 65, head of the National Development and Reform Commission

Chen Wenqing, 62, party chief of ministry of state security

Huang Kunming, 65, head of the Central Committee's propaganda department

Li Shulei, 58, deputy head of the Central Committee's propaganda department

Shi Taifeng, 66, member of the Central Committee's Secretariat

Chen Miner, 62, party chief of Chongqing

Ma Xingrui, 63, party chief of Xinjiang

Yuan Jiajun, 60, party chief of Zhejiang

Yin Li, 60, party chief of Fujian

Li Ganjie, 57, party chief of Shandong

Liu Guozhong, 60, party chief of Shaanxi

Zhang Guoqing, 58, party chief of Liaoning

Li Hongzhong, 66, party chief of Tianjin

Chen Jining, 58, mayor of Beijing

Central Military Commission Chairman:

Xi Jinping

Central Commission for Discipline Inspection Secretary:

Li Xi

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BEIJING -- The following is a look at the seven men making up the Communist Party of China's all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee for the next five years.

The lineup was unveiled Sunday. Three are holdovers from the previous committee, including General Secretary Xi Jinping, who has received a precedent-breaking third term as party head.

The four newcomers are all Xi loyalists, while the exclusion of Premier Li Keqiang and top advisory body head Wang Yang are seen as signs that representatives of other factions are no longer welcome on the top body.

They lined up before assembled media in the Great Hall of the People, standing on both sides of Xi in order of rank. All state titles will be bestowed at the legislature's meeting in the spring.

#### 1. ALL-POWERFUL LEADER XI JINPING

Xi laid down the conditions for his continuation in power with the elimination of term limits. Even before then, he had sidelined rivals and accumulated ultimate authority by assuming the leadership of working groups operating outside the ministries that oversee everything from national security to economic policy. His third term is being hailed as a return to one-man rule after a period of more collegial decision making.

Xi is what is known as a "princeling," the son of one of Mao Zedong's comrades in the founding of the People's Republic who despite falling out of favor returned to implement important economic reforms. Xi Jinping, meanwhile, worked his way through a series of provincial postings until being appointed vice president and then party leader in 2012, and state president in 2013.

Xi, who has a law degree from Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University, has consolidated power through a sweeping anti-corruption campaign, reasserted the role of the state sector in the economy, expanded the military and led ruthless crackdowns on civil rights in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. He is also known for his glamorous wife, People's Liberation Army vocalist Peng Liyuan, although the two have traveled little together since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak.

#### 2. SHANGHAI CHIEF LI QIANG

Li Qiang has been party secretary of Shanghai, China's largest city and financial hub, since 2017 and was parachuted into the Politburo Standing Committee, possibly as a future premier. The Shanghai post is one of China's most important and was previously held by Xi, former President Jiang Zemin and former Premier Zhu Rongji.

Li, 63, is regarded as being close to Xi after serving under him in Li's native southeastern province of Zhejiang, a center for export-oriented manufacturing and private enterprise. He headed the province's political and legal affairs department before being made deputy party secretary and holds an MBA from Hong Kong Polytechnic University.



Li's reputation was dented by a lengthy COVID-19 lockdown of Shanghai earlier this year that confined 25 million people to their homes, severely disrupting the economy and prompting scattered public protests. While district-level officials were punished as a means of placating public anger, Li was not known to have addressed the difficulties of adhering closely to Xi's hardline "zero-COVID" policy. His elevation to the Politburo Standing Committee appears to indicate that loyalty to Xi trumps public popularity and competence in governance when it comes to political advancement.

### 3. ANTI-CORRUPTION CHIEF ZHAO LEJI

Since 2017, Zhao Leji has run the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the party's much-feared body for policing corruption and other malfeasance. That has made him a key figure in Xi's campaign to bring party members inline that has at times been characterized as a vehicle for eliminating opponents and instilling loyalty. He is now in line to head the National People's Congress, the largely ceremonial legislature that meets in full session just once a year and whose deliberations are mainly carried out behind closed doors by its smaller standing committee.

Zhao, 65, is seen by some analysts as part of Xi's "Shaanxi Gang" of figures with family ties to the western province of Shaanxi. Before moving to Beijing, Zhao was party secretary for Shaanxi and, before that, for the remote western province of Qinghai on the Tibetan plateau, where he was born and spent his early career.

Zhao, like Xi, is a second-generation party member and unconfirmed accounts say their fathers were friends. The relationship is seen as having aided Xi in his push to eliminate term limits and continue as party general secretary indefinitely.

### 4. POLITICAL THEORIST WANG HUNING

Longtime party political theorist Wang Huning, 62, has been a member of the Politburo Standing Committee since 2017 and moves up from fifth position, reflecting his status as one of Xi's most important advisers. The fourth spot usually goes to the head of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the advisory group to the NPC that also oversees non-Communist groupings, religious organizations and minority groups.

Wang, who has a background in academia, has largely been in charge of party ideology as an advisor to a succession of leaders. Unusual for those at the pinnacle of power, he has no experience as a regional governor, party leader or cabinet minister.

Since 2017, he has served as director of the Central Leading Small Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reform, a relatively obscure body that helps enforce Xi's policies. He was formerly dean of the prestigious Fudan University law school in Shanghai and a professor of international politics. Wang advocates a strong, centralized Chinese state to resist foreign influence.

Wang is credited by foreign researchers with developing the official ideologies of three Chinese leaders — Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents," Hu Jintao's "Scientific Development Concept" and Xi's "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in a New Era." He is also the author of the highly critical book "America Against America," written after a 1991 visit to the United States, which points to economic inequality and other American social and political challenges.

### 5. BEIJING PARTY LEADER CAI QI

Cai Qi is another newcomer to the Politburo Standing Committee, a talented politician who has a long-established relationship with Xi. As with Xi, Cai worked in the coastal provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang, arriving in Beijing in 2016 first as mayor before being promoted to the top spot of party secretary the next year.

His time in office has been more varied and challenging than some of his predecessors. He brought the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics in on time and with relatively little disruption and has carried out Xi's "zero-COVID" strategy without causing the sort of massive upheaval seen in Shanghai.

Cai, 66, is a Fujian native and considered one of the party's leading intellectuals, having earned a doctorate in political economy from Fujian Normal University, while also proving himself a competent manager.

#### 6. XI CONFIDANTE DING XUEXIANG

As head of the General Office since 2017, Ding Xuexiang holds one of the most important bureaucratic positions in the party, with sweeping control over information and access to officials. That implies that Xi puts a high degree of trust in him and Ding is often among the few officials attending sensitive meetings alongside the general secretary. That has earned him the sobriquets "Xi's alter ego" and "Xi's chief of staff."

Ding, 60, joined the Politburo in 2017 and has held a variety of posts within the party rather than in government administration. Like Wang Huning, he has never been a governor, provincial party secretary or minister.

#### 7. LI XI, HEAD OF INDUSTRIAL POWERHOUSE GUANGDONG

Li Xi's elevation to the Politburo Standing Committee appears to come in recognition of his success in promoting integration between Guangdong, with its technology center of Shenzhen, and international finance hub Hong Kong.

Li, 66, has also been named to succeed Zhao Leji as head of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, whose activities Xi is bound to take a close interest in. Li's father was an architect of Shenzhen's success, which may have endeared him to Xi despite their having no obvious close working relationship.

Li also has the special distinction of having been party secretary of Yan'an, where the party founded its headquarters at the end of the famed Long March to escape Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces. The caves carved from the loess hills where Mao Zedong and other party leaders road out World War II have since become a pilgrimage site for party faithful. He later rose to be deputy Shanghai party secretary and then party secretary of the northeastern rust belt province of Liaoning.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Russia pounds Ukraine, more blackouts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukrainian-infrastructure-pounded-again-saturday-2022-10-22/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukrainian-infrastructure-pounded-again-saturday-2022-10-22/</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Oct 23 (Reuters) - Russian missiles pounded Ukrainian energy and other facilities on Saturday, causing blackouts in various regions, Kyiv said, while Russian occupation authorities in the southern city of Kherson urged civilians to evacuate.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the Russian attacks had struck on a "very wide" scale. He pledged his military would improve on an already good record of downing missiles with help from its partners.</p> <p>With the war about to start its ninth month and winter approaching, the potential for freezing misery loomed as Russia continued to attack Ukraine's power grid.</p> <p>In Kherson, a target for Ukraine's aggressive counterattack to the invasion Russian President Vladimir Putin launched on Feb. 24, the occupation authorities instructed civilians to get out.</p>

"Due to the tense situation at the front, the increased danger of massive shelling of the city and the threat of terrorist attacks, all civilians must immediately leave the city and cross to the (east) bank of the Dnipro!" occupation authorities posted on Telegram.

Thousands of civilians have left Kherson after warnings of a Ukrainian offensive to recapture the city.

At Oleshky on the opposite bank of the Dnipro, Reuters saw people arriving by river boat from Kherson, loaded with boxes, bags and pets. One woman carried a toddler under one arm and a dog under the other.

"I really didn't want to (leave), I'm still in work," one resident said. "We wanted to stay here in the region, but now we don't know."

Ukraine's military said it was making gains as its forces moved south through the region, taking over at least two villages it said Russian troops had abandoned. Kherson links Ukraine to the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Russia in 2014.

Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said on Telegram: "Kherson region! Just a little bit more. Hang in there. The Ukrainian Armed Forces are at work."

Reuters could not independently verify the accounts.

#### 'MASS STRIKE'

Since Oct. 10, Russia has launched devastating salvos at Ukraine's power infrastructure, hitting at least half its thermal power generation and up to 40% of the entire system.

Officials in a swath of regions on Saturday reported strikes on energy facilities and power outages as engineers scrambled to restore the network. Governors advised residents to stock up on water.

More than a million people were without power, said presidential adviser Kyrylo Tymoshenko. Parts of Kyiv suffered power cuts into the evening, and a city official warned strikes could leave Ukraine's capital without power and heat for "several days or weeks".

Presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said Moscow wanted to create a new wave of refugees into Europe with the strikes, while Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter the attacks constituted genocide.

Moscow has acknowledged targeting energy infrastructure but denies targeting civilians.

Zelenskiy, in his nightly video address, said the "latest mass strike" affected regions in western, central and southern Ukraine.

"Of course we don't have the technical ability to knock down 100% of the Russian missiles and strike drones. I am sure that, gradually, we will achieve that, with help from our partners. Already now, we are downing a majority of cruise missiles, a majority of drones."

Ukrainian forces had downed 20 missiles and more than 10 Iranian-made Shahed drones on Saturday, he said. The air force command earlier had said 33 missiles had been fired at Ukraine, with 18 shot down.

No new developments were reported regarding the Nova Kakhovka dam. Zelenskiy on Friday urged the West to warn Moscow not to blow up the Russian-controlled dam on the Dnipro.

Russia has accused Kyiv of rocketing the dam and planning to destroy it in what Ukrainian officials called a sign that Moscow might blow it up and blame Kyiv. Neither side has produced evidence to back up their allegations.

	<p>The Soviet-era structure holds back 18 cubic km (4.3 cubic miles) of water, about equal to the Great Salt Lake in the U.S. state of Utah. Its destruction could devastate much of the Kherson region. It supplies water to Crimea and the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.</p> <p>Regarding the Zaporizhzhia plant, considered a potential flashpoint for catastrophe, the Group of Seven industrial powers on Saturday condemned Russia's kidnapping of the Ukraine-operated plant's leaders and called for the immediate return of full control of the plant to Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Xi's precedent-breaking 3<sup>rd</sup> term president</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-communist-party-politburo-standing-committee-unveiled-2022-10-23/">https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-communist-party-politburo-standing-committee-unveiled-2022-10-23/</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING, Oct 23 (Reuters) - China's Xi Jinping secured a precedent-breaking third leadership term on Sunday and introduced a new top governing body stacked with loyalists, cementing his place as the country's most powerful ruler since Mao Zedong.</p> <p>Shanghai Communist Party chief Li Qiang followed Xi onto the stage at the Great Hall of the People as the new Politburo Standing Committee was introduced, putting him in line to succeed Li Keqiang when the premier retires in March.</p> <p>The other members of the seven-man Standing Committee are Zhao Leji and Wang Huning, who return from the previous committee, and newcomers Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi. Li Qiang is also new to the Standing Committee.</p> <p>All are seen by analysts to have close allegiance to Xi, the son of a Communist Party revolutionary who has taken China in a more authoritarian direction since rising to power in 2012.</p> <p>"The result was a resounding victory for Xi, more decisive than many experienced observers had forecast," said Richard McGregor, senior fellow for East Asia at the Lowy Institute think tank in Sydney.</p> <p>"All of his rivals, potential and real, have been forced out of the Politburo Standing Committee and Xi loyalists took their place. The new Politburo is an emphatic statement of Xi's dominance over the party."</p> <p>The unveiling of the Standing Committee and the larger 24-member Politburo comes a day after the closing of the Communist Party's 20th Congress, where amendments were added to the party charter cementing the core status of Xi and the guiding role of his political thought within the party.</p> <p>Still, the 69-year-old Xi faces stiff challenges as the world's second-largest economy slows and frustration over his zero-COVID policy grows. China is also increasing estranged from the West, exacerbated by Xi's support for Russia's Vladimir Putin and mounting tensions over Taiwan.</p> <p>"This is a leadership that will be focused on achieving Xi's political goals, rather than pursuing their own agendas for what they think is best for the country," said Drew Thompson, a visiting senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. "There is only one correct way to govern, and that is Xi's way."</p> <p><b>XI'S NEW MEN</b></p> <p>As expected, the new line-up does not include a clear successor to Xi, whose predecessor Hu Jintao was unexpectedly escorted out of the congress closing ceremony on Saturday.</p> <p>The ascension of Li Qiang, 63, to the number-two spot, meanwhile, speaks to the importance of ties to Xi.</p> <p>As Shanghai party chief, Li was a lightning rod for some of the public ire that made it past censors over the city's grinding two-month COVID-19 lockdown earlier this year. But Li and Xi share a long history, including Li's stint as Xi's chief of staff when Xi was party chief in Zhejiang province.</p>

Another new Standing Committee member is Xi's private secretary and gatekeeper, Ding Xuexiang, who at 60 is the youngest on the new panel. Ding heads the party Central Committee's powerful General Office, which manages the administrative affairs of the top leadership.

Cai Qi, 66, joins the Standing Committee from his post as Beijing party chief and is considered one of Xi's closest political allies, having worked with him for 20 years in the coastal provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang.

The fourth newcomer is Li Xi, 66, party chief of economic powerhouse Guangdong province, who is also perceived by experts to be ideologically close to Xi, although they do not share a history of working together as the others do.

#### CONSPICUOUS ABSENCES

The unveiling comes a day after Li Keqiang and Wang Yang, seen by analysts as relative moderates that were young enough to serve longer in top decision-making bodies, were excluded from the wider Central Committee. Both have ties with the Communist Youth League, a once-influential group that experts say has lost power under Xi.

Another conspicuous absence from Sunday's unveiling was Hu Chunhua, a vice premier who had been considered by some party-watchers as a candidate for the premiership and who also has Youth League roots. Hu, 59, was not chosen to return to the Politburo, which now has 24 members, one fewer than usual.

Also missing from the Politburo: any women. The lone woman on the last Politburo, Sun Chunlan, retired.

Xi laid the groundwork to rule beyond a decade when he eliminated the two-term limit on the presidency in 2018. His term as president is likely to be renewed at the annual parliamentary session in March, where the next premier will also be officially named.

"Xi's full control means his team will be fully responsible for any policy mistake," said Yang Zhang, assistant professor at American University's School of International Service in Washington.

"His autocracy may provoke stronger international pushback from the U.S.-led Western countries. All of these scenarios will make his third and likely fourth terms not as easy as expected," he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Weapons shortages hard call Ukraine allies</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2022-10-22/weapons-shortages-hard-calls-allies-7771971.html">https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2022-10-22/weapons-shortages-hard-calls-allies-7771971.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Weapons shortages across Europe could force hard choices for Ukraine's allies as they balance their support for Ukraine against the risk that Russia could target them next.</p> <p>For months, the United States and other NATO members have sent billions of dollars worth of weapons and equipment into Ukraine to help it fight back against Russia. But for many of the smaller NATO countries, and even some of the larger ones, the war has strained already-depleted weapons stockpiles. Some allies sent all their reserve Soviet-era weaponry and are now waiting for U.S. replacements.</p> <p>It can be difficult for some European countries to rapidly resupply because they no longer have a strong defense sector to quickly build replacements, with many relying on a dominant American defense industry that has elbowed out some foreign competitors.</p> <p>Now they face a dilemma: Do they keep sending their stocks of weapons to Ukraine and potentially increase their own vulnerability to Russian attack or do they hold back what's left to protect their homeland, risking the possibility that makes a Russian victory in Ukraine more likely?</p> <p>It's a tough calculation.</p>

After eight months of intense fighting, the allies expect the war will continue for months, maybe years, with both sides rapidly using up weapons supplies. Victory may come down to who can last longer.

The stockpile strain comes up "all the time," especially among smaller NATO countries, said Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur of Estonia, a Baltic nation that shares a 183-mile border with Russia.

It weighs on them even as Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has urged members of the Western alliance, at a recent NATO gathering in Brussels, "to dig deep and provide additional capability" to Ukraine.

European officials, in public comments and interviews with The Associated Press, said Russia must not be allowed to win in Ukraine and that their support will continue. But they stressed that domestic defense is weighing on them all.

"Our estimation is that Russia will restore their capabilities sooner rather than later" because Russian President Vladimir Putin can order weapons makers to go into 24-hour a day production, Pevkur said.

Russia has directed some troops to factories instead of the front line, he said. The minister said Russia has a track record of reconstituting its military so it can launch invasions against European neighbors every few years, citing moves against Georgia in 2008, Ukraine's Black Sea peninsula of Crimea in 2014 and now all of Ukraine this year.

"So the question is, 'How much risk are you ready to take?'" Pevkur said at a German Marshall Fund event this past week.

Other smaller nations, such as fellow Baltic state Lithuania, face the same challenges. But so do some larger NATO members, including Germany.

"Ukraine has led to a general shortage of supply because so many states have forgotten that conventional war is burning through your ammunition reserve. Just burning through it," Dovilė Šakalienė, a member of Lithuania's Parliament, said in a phone interview. "In certain situations, even the word 'excess' is not applicable. In certain situations, we left ourselves with a bare minimum."

Germany faces a similar situation, the ministry of defense said in an email to the AP. "Yes, the Bundeswehr's stocks are limited. Just as it is the case in other European countries," the ministry said.

"I cannot tell you what the exact stockpiles are because of security aspects. However, we are working to close the current gaps."

For some NATO countries, it may not be possible to "dig deep," said Max Bergmann, the European director for the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"They've cut the fat essentially," Bergmann said. "Now they are cutting into the bone."

The stockpiles are low because for many European nations, military spending became a lower priority after the end of the Cold War, which weakened their defense industrial bases. U.S. defense companies also had a role as they moved in to compete for European contracts.

"We wanted them to buy American," Bergmann said. "When the Norwegians are operating F-16s and F-35s instead of the Swedish Saab Gripen" fighter jets, it has an impact on Europe's defense market strength, he said.

The U.S. has long urged other NATO member countries to increase defense spending to 2% of their GDP — a target most hadn't met.



Since the Russian invasion, multiple European countries have pledged significant increases in defense spending to quickly reconstitute their militaries while they send Ukraine much of what they have on hand.

Estonia has provided the equivalent of one-third of its defense budget to Ukraine, Pevkur said. Norway has provided more than 45% of its stock of howitzers, Slovenia has committed nearly 40% of its tanks and the Czech Republic had sent about 33% of its multiple launch rocket systems, according to the Germany-based Kiel Institute. The team based its analysis on an annual report on the known weapons and troop sizes of militaries worldwide published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The U.S. has committed more than \$17.5 billion in weapons and equipment to Ukraine since February, raising questions among some members of Congress as to whether it too is assuming too much risk. The Pentagon will not provide data on its own stockpiles.

The Washington-based Stimson Center research group estimates the Ukraine war has reduced the U.S. stockpiles of Javelin anti-tank weapons by as much as one-third and Stinger missile inventories by 25%. It's also put pressure on artillery supplies because the U.S.-manufactured M777 Howitzer is no longer in production.

Pentagon spokesman Air Force Gen. Pat Ryder said that when Austin recently met with the top government weapons buyers of scores of countries, he discussed the need to "not only replenish our own stocks as an international community, but also ensure that we can continue to support Ukraine going forward."

Estonia passed a 42.5% defense budget increase this year to replenish its stocks. Germany is working on long-term contracts for high-grade munitions such as Stinger missiles and in September signed a 560 million euro (\$548 million) contract for 600 new Navy guided missiles, with delivery planned through 2029.

Restoring stockpiles and rebuilding weapons manufacturing capability will be a long process, said Tom Waldwyn a defense procurement researcher for the IISS.

For some countries, "it may require more significant investment in infrastructure. This will not be cheap as inflation and supply chain instability have pushed up costs," Waldwyn said.

Šakalienė has been pressing other members of Lithuania's Parliament to start awarding long-term defense contracts now to rebuild the country's ability to defend itself.

"Without making long-term sustainable decisions in expansion of military industry, we are not safe," Šakalienė said. "This decade is not going to be peaceful. This decade is going to be tough."

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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Russian mercenaries eye symbolic prize</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2022-10-22/bloody-battle-bakhmut-russian-mercenaries-symbolic-prize-7772711.html">https://www.stripes.com/theaters/europe/2022-10-22/bloody-battle-bakhmut-russian-mercenaries-symbolic-prize-7772711.html</a>
GIST	<p>BAKHMUT, Ukraine - The crash and roar of artillery rarely stops in this east Ukrainian city. In the cold and broken houses, residents huddle by candlelight and pray that they have safety in numbers. On the battlefield, soldiers on both sides are dying in droves.</p> <p>While Ukrainian advances have redrawn the battlefield map elsewhere, the front line in Bakhmut, some 10 miles from the border of Donetsk and Luhansk, has barely moved in four months of heavy fighting.</p> <p>Of all the battles in the east, President Volodymyr Zelensky said last week, the "most difficult" is here. Yet in this fight for control of a shattered city, military experts say the ambitions of a Russian oligarch, Yevgeniy Prigozhin, founder of the Wagner mercenary group, may have eclipsed all strategic logic.</p>

After a disorderly Russian retreat from nearby Izyum, the battle for Bakhmut is no longer part of any coordinated military operation. Instead, Prigozhin is pouring waves of mercenaries from Wagner into battle, appearing to see political advantage in capturing Bakhmut as a military trophy while President Vladimir Putin's regular forces are on the back foot elsewhere.

Outgunned and outnumbered, exhausted Ukrainian troops are relying on nimbler tactics to withstand the brutal battle, monitoring enemy lines with civilian drones as newly recruited engineers experiment with customized weapons from pop-up laboratories in abandoned buildings nearby.

"To be honest, we have to," said Vlad, who is overseeing the 93rd Brigade's effort to refit drones, antitank mines and other weapons so that they are more effective. "The Russians have the soldiers, the guns, everything. We need to be smart," he said.

The salt-mining city of Bakhmut had a population of 70,000 before Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine. Perhaps 15,000 remain, but the streets were almost empty as fighting raged there this week. Weeds smothered the wheat fields. Military vehicles sped down roads gouged by rockets, kicking up clouds of dust as they went.

At the 93rd Brigade's command post, a drone operator peered at the live feed of Russian positions that it was sending back to him. The soldiers worked fast, slipping mortar rounds down the barrel and loosing them up through the sky. Someone had scrawled "director" on the drone operator's chair. Squinting down at the screen of his tablet, he waited a second, then he nodded, and a ripple of delight coursed through the men.

They had hit the target.

But these still felt like some of the unit's worst days, said Dima, their 25-year-old commander. When darkness enveloped their dugout a night earlier, Russian forces fired on them with mortars and cluster munitions. "It's not the first time we've been under fire, but this is different now," Dima said.

After four years in the Ukrainian army, Dima said the battle for Bakhmut was among the "most dangerous" he had witnessed.

The fighting and its echoes hung heavy through the city on Wednesday. The air throbbed with the sound of shelling. When that fell quiet, clanking metal in the wind was the only sound left.

A 51-year-old entrepreneur, Oleksander, had dried blood on his face from a rocket strike that smashed his home the night before. He did not have clean water to wash up. He said he had invited his neighbors, a young couple and their daughter, to stay with him in the apartment, thinking that they would be safer if they stuck together.

The parents were now in intensive care, he said, and their 9-year-old child Liza had been evacuated, alone, to another city.

"I thought our place was safer," he said blankly. "We were just sitting there. We were drinking tea."

In a recent analysis, the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, described Prigozhin's Bakhmut effort as "irrelevant operationally" after Russia's loss of Izyum, 60 miles north.

"The Russian seizure of Bakhmut, which is unlikely to occur considering Russian forces have impaled themselves on tiny surrounding settlements for weeks, would no longer support any larger effort to accomplish the original objectives of this phase of the campaign," the report concluded, "since it would not be supported by an advance from Izyum in the north."

Prigozhin, who is nicknamed Putin's chef because he grew fabulously wealthy off of government catering contracts, has been a loud critic of the regular Russian military's performance in Ukraine. His involvement

in the Ukraine war is seen by analysts as part of his effort to curry favor and potentially additional state contracts. There is also speculation among the Russian elite that he is angling for a government post.

Wagner played a key role in the capture of Popasna in May but reportedly took heavy losses. According to pro-Kremlin military bloggers, Prigozhin was awarded the nation's highest honor, a Hero of Russia medal, the following month.

After long denying any link to Wagner, which has sent soldiers-for-hire to Syria, Libya, Mali, Mozambique and the Central African Republic, Prigozhin acknowledged last month that he created the group. In a recent self-published interview he claimed that Wagner was carrying out the assault on Bakhmut alone, and called the situation "difficult."

For the Ukrainians, surrendering Bakhmut would give the Russians a hugely symbolic victory, and undermine the prevailing narrative that Moscow's forces are steadily losing ground and Putin's war is failing. In theory, capturing Bakhmut would put the Russians one step closer to bigger urban centers of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, but there is little evidence that the Russians could make a push for them now.

Across four locations in the Bakhmut area, Ukrainian soldiers described how Wagner troops at times appear to have been used almost as cannon fodder. "They're treating them like single-use soldiers," said Volodymyr, 24, the commander of a self-propelled artillery unit, as he waited on spotters to call in a new target. Usually it was infantry, he said.

Another soldier nodded.

"If we are shelling those positions, they keep pushing the men forward again and again," the second soldier said. "They want to smoke us out, then fire artillery on us."

From the 93rd Brigade's position, drone operators have seen the mercenaries stumble over the bodies of fallen comrades as they advance.

A Russian reporter who filmed Wagner's front-line positions near Bakhmut late last month reported that Prigozhin's son was fighting there, and interviewed him, without identifying him by name.

"Bakhmut is a road to many directions. It's a very important point strategically for the Ukrainian forces and for us," another fighter said in the video. "Their team is ready to fight until the end, no matter what the losses are."

The scale of the Russian losses are not known, but Ukrainian soldiers interviewed said they estimated them to be significant. "The number is big on their side because they're not treating them like people," said Misha, a 25-year-old soldier from the 93rd Brigade.

Ukraine's casualties are also heavy. Ambulances shuttled back and forth between the Ukrainian firing positions last week, apparently carrying wounded men from the front line.

At a nearby hospital, two soldiers said they had brought four members of their unit to the emergency room after a Russian rocket attack in Bakhmut, and that three were in a critical condition. Their bloodstained jackets were still in the car. In a video taken shortly after the incident, the fourth man was seen howling in pain with his femur snapped at a sickening angle.

The day before, they said, another company had been surrounded by Russian forces, and fired upon. "There weren't even pieces of them left," said one of the soldiers, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of describing Ukrainian casualties.

For Bakhmut's residents, there is also little left. Rockets pound the city every day. A civilian doctor tries to patch up the injuries, but the walking wounded often just pull the shrapnel from their bodies on their own.

	<p>Standing on the Bakhmutka River's eastern bank this week, Vitalii Kuzmienko, 52, stared up at a damaged bridge, its deck blown away, leaving a huge gap at mid-span. To stop Russian forces from advancing, the Ukrainians had laid antitank mines on one side, but those mines never detonated.</p> <p>Kuzmienko said his house had been destroyed in the fighting, and so he was living in the wreckage of an outdoor market. His relatives were buried in Bakhmut, he said, and he didn't want to leave them.</p> <p>With alcohol on his breath, Kuzmienko said he feared that shelling might hit the bridge, and detonate the unexploded mines and then damage nearby civilian homes. He said he drank every day now to numb the fear and to help him sleep.</p> <p>When four rockets slammed into the riverbank moments later, he barely moved.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Burn areas 'high risk' slides, flooding</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/communities-in-burn-areas-at-a-high-risk-for-slides-flooding-with-recent-rainfall">https://www.q13fox.com/news/communities-in-burn-areas-at-a-high-risk-for-slides-flooding-with-recent-rainfall</a>
GIST	<p>GROTTO, Wash. - The relief many have felt from seeing snow and rain is short-lived for those living in the <a href="#">shadow of the steep slopes and mountainsides</a> burned by the late-season fires.</p> <p>Communities in those areas now face concerns over landslides and flash flooding.</p> <p>The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and residents are keeping a close eye on the situation. The DNR says some of the most vulnerable spots include land that sits in a high drainage area called an <a href="#">Alluvial Fan</a>, which includes the unincorporated area of Grotto in King County.</p> <p>"I knew that there was going to be trees falling," said Betsy Wright, of Grotto.</p> <p>She said she's already heard the trees crashing onto US 2 in an area scarred by fire. One recently fell just under a mile from her home with a thunderous boom.</p> <p>"I heard it, and it's scary," said Wright.</p> <p>The DNR has specifically warned Grotto to be alert for landslides and debris flows.</p> <p>"The community of Grotto is on an Alluvial Fan and the basin above them is modeled as high risk," said Kate Mickelson, Landslide Hazards Program Manager with the DNR. "What we like to tell people is they need to watch for impending storms."</p> <p>Mickelson says the concern also extends beyond this <a href="#">first rainfall of the season</a>.</p> <p>"What a wildfire does is it can change the soil to be more erodible and cause excess runoff. They could see excess runoff this winter and as tree roots decay over the coming years, we could see larger events," said Mickelson.</p> <p>Wright's neighborhood was also one of the first to evacuate from the Bolt Creek Fire. She says the fire stopped around 300 feet away from her house and shared some pictures of an area that had burned near her property.</p> <p>"When we got kicked out of here on Saturday the 10th we thought we were losing everything," said Wright.</p> <p>She's also aware of the latest concern: <a href="#">flash flooding</a>. Not far from her home a sign on the highway reads, "Flash Flood Danger" from her community through <a href="#">Skykomish</a>.</p>

	<p>Grotto sits in an area already prone to flooding.</p> <p>"Our street becomes a river when it rains," said Wright. "I have a weather machine on my roof, so it records how much rain we get and it is not uncommon to get five inches of rain in an hour. It happens. Ten inches in a day."</p> <p>Wright says her husband has told her to flee to higher ground in the event of a slide or debris flow. She says he's identified one possible route so far.</p> <p>"I don't know how you escape a mud flow, I have no idea," said Wright. "I always keep an eye on the ditches, I keep an eye on our rainfall. I guess that's about what you can do."</p> <p>The DNR says you should also be on the lookout for flash flood warnings from the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Mickelson says the DNR is in the early stages of gathering data on slides and the impacts of wildfire in Western Washington. She says it's estimated that the largest debris flows could happen up to five years or longer after the fire.</p> <p>She says the DNR will be installing weather gauges in the coming weeks to better study the impacts of the Bolt Creek Fire on slides.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Bolt Creek fire impacts to last for years</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfire/bolt-creek-fire-impacts/281-cadc0ad0-1a0f-4c9b-8f6e-0d9c29615c9d">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/wildfire/bolt-creek-fire-impacts/281-cadc0ad0-1a0f-4c9b-8f6e-0d9c29615c9d</a>
GIST	<p>SKYKOMISH, Wash. — Crews are finally heading home from the Bolt Creek Fire, after battling the smoke and flames for more than a month. However, people living there are still far from out of the woods.</p> <p>It's back to business as usual at LouSki's Deli.</p> <p>Receipts have been off 75% since the wildfire started 42 days ago -- choking the Skykomish Valley with the worst air quality on the planet.</p> <p>But today, owner Glenn Eburn can finally exhale.</p> <p>"I'm relieved," he says. "It's nice to look around, see the mountains and be able to breathe fresh air."</p> <p>Businesses across the tourist-dependent valley suffered greatly as the fire closed Highway 2 for weeks with charred trees falling across the road.</p> <p>Businesses missed out on four weeks of hiking season, as well as some of the annual Oktoberfest in Leavenworth.</p> <p>Today, wounds from the wildfire lay bare for all to see.</p> <p>Fallen trees sit next to the mangled guardrails they smashed</p> <p>Scars on the landscape will last for years.</p> <p>A new Department of Natural Resources report on the fire warns that because so many trees have burned, there will likely be flash floods, landslides and falling trees "for several years after the fire."</p> <p>"Nobody really knows exactly what the ground is going to be like with all of the timber that's burned," says Eburn.</p>

	<p>That worries Skykomish Mayor Henry Sladek, who runs a local inn.</p> <p>He's concerned that landslides could close Highway 2 to the west and avalanches at Stevens Pass could close it to the east this winter, trapping townspeople for weeks.</p> <p>A state Department of Transportation sign is warning travelers to watch for floods and slides between mileposts 38 and 50.</p> <p>The department is telling locals to be prepared to be stranded for up to two weeks.</p> <p>"We've been in touch with emergency managers making plans for things like getting food, water, fuel supplies and stuff like that for extended periods of time," says Mayor Sladek.</p> <p>For now, townsfolk are simply happy the skies have cleared, but at the same time those skies reveal the first snow of the year atop the Cascades.</p> <p>Wildfire season has come and gone, with winter fast approaching.</p> <p>'We're stocked here at the deli,' says Eburn. "We've stocked up at the house. We're ready to go."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Poor air quality hits worst mark in decade</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/prolonged-poor-air-quality-in-wa-hits-highest-mark-in-past-decade/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/prolonged-poor-air-quality-in-wa-hits-highest-mark-in-past-decade/</a>
GIST	<p>Rain and winds in the Seattle area are a welcome relief as they pushed out wildfire smoke that has clouded the air for weeks on end.</p> <p>When <a href="#">Seattle recorded the world's worst air quality</a> this week, Washington reached another grim milestone as the duration of exposure to poor air quality hit a 10-year peak.</p> <p>For the first time in at least a decade, the average number of days with moderate or worse air quality in Washington inched closer to a full month, according to data from the state Department of Ecology.</p> <p>In Washington, the <a href="#">wildfire season typically runs from June to September</a> and particularly affects the region east of the Cascades.</p> <p>But this year, for the first time, a significant wildfire smoke event has extended into October in Western Washington, where the regional climate is milder and wetter, according to Susan Woodward, spokesperson for the Ecology Department.</p> <p>The last time active wildfire smoke concerns extended into the fall was in 2012, though it remained east of the Cascades in drier, hotter parts of Central and Eastern Washington, particularly the Wenatchee area.</p> <p>While other sources of air pollution such as vehicular exhaust fumes and industrial pollution, largely in urban areas, may commonly cause a moderate reading on the air quality index, several days in the moderate range this summer were affected by wildfire smoke, Woodward said.</p> <p>On average, between 2016 and 2020, Washington residents were exposed to 34 days of smoky air annually, compared to 22 days from 2009 to 2014, according to a <a href="#">2021 analysis of federal satellite imagery of smoke waves</a> by NPR's California Newsroom and Stanford University's Environmental Change and Human Outcomes Lab.</p> <p>The greatest exposure to hazardous air was recorded in 2015, when Washington wildfires, the worst in state history, were declared <a href="#">a federal emergency</a>.</p>

Though the state has recorded a prolonged exposure to poor air quality this year due to wildfire smoke, the intensity of the exposure is not as hazardous as it has been in previous years, Woodward pointed out.

“By comparison, there have been no hazardous days in 2022,” Woodward said.

A growing body of research on wildfire smoke and its impact on human health shows even [short-term exposure](#) has adverse effects.

Particle pollution or fine particulate matter, the main component of wildfire smoke, is 10 to 30 times thinner than human hair and can be inhaled deep into lungs and enter the bloodstream.

They pose the [greatest threat to public health](#), according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Exposure can range from relatively minor effects, like an eye or respiratory tract irritation, to more [serious health effects](#) such as exacerbation of asthma, heart failure and premature death, the EPA said. Emerging research has further found that exposure to wildfire smoke is also linked to [cognitive decline](#) and [pregnancy risks](#).

[New research shows](#) wildfire smoke now accounts for up to half of all PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure on the West Coast, compared to less than 20% a decade ago.

In fact, the [increasingly routine exposure to wildfire smoke](#) is erasing decades of air quality gains and exposing millions of Americans to extreme pollution levels, say researchers at Stanford University. The state Ecology Department is cautious to agree.

“Washington has seen significant reductions over decades in all air pollutants we are required to monitor. We don’t think these achievements have been erased due to particulate pollution [PM<sub>2.5</sub>] from this season of wildfire smoke,” said Woodward, adding that the growing exposure to wildfire smoke is still concerning.

“Its presence is a clear indication of the need for climate action and strategies that improve year-round air quality and reduce the burden on public health.”

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HEADLINE	10/21 Ukraine braces for a cold winter
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/21/world/europe/ukraine-heat-winter.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/21/world/europe/ukraine-heat-winter.html</a>
GIST	<p>CHERNIHIV, Ukraine — Near the front door of the second-floor apartment is a pile of blankets, just in case. Plastic sheeting covers the broken windows in the main bedroom. The lower half of the wall protrudes precariously out, seemingly ready to fall.</p> <p>Nataliia Rebenko, 64, and her husband, Oleksiy Rebenko, 72, have been living like this for months, since fighting ceased in their northern Ukraine city, Chernihiv. But now, as temperatures drop, they worry how they will make it through the winter.</p> <p>“It’s already getting really cold,” Mr. Rebenko said. “And we are worried because, in Chernihiv, the infrastructure that brings us heating could be destroyed. So we are already thinking of a backup plan.”</p> <p>For many in Europe, the rising cost of heating homes this winter has already caused alarm, contributing to soaring inflation and <a href="#">cutting into support for Ukraine in the war</a>. But in Ukraine itself, there is a far deeper worry — about keeping warm at all.</p> <p>In cities and towns battered by the war, like Chernihiv, high-rise buildings are half occupied and half destroyed, making it impossible to properly heat apartments.</p>



To make matters worse, many of Ukraine's cities depend for heat on centralized systems dating to Soviet times, making the problem of restoring heat all the more intractable, particularly amid renewed Russian bombardment of urban areas far from the front lines.

While Ukrainians have endured cuts to water and all manner of other services, fears about heat are now primary. [The World Health Organization has warned](#) of the potential for a spiraling humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, where lack of access to fuel or electricity "could become a matter of life or death."

For the moment, "we are OK, we are getting through it," Ms. Rebenko said, adding that the chill is just about bearable. Officials have promised the heat will be turned on here, despite the extensive damage.

Her husband monitors the news daily, and for the last several weeks has been traveling to a relative's home to chop wood and stockpile it for the stove there. The family plans to head there if things get worse.

Earlier in the day, Ms. Rebenko stood in line with dozens of neighbors to collect free loaves of bread being handed out by aid workers from the back of a truck parked in a lot where dozens of civilians had been killed in a missile strike in March.

The facade was blown off part of the building in that attack, and some apartments were reduced to rubble. One woman pointed to a large slab of cement on the ground. She could tell from the charred wallpaper, she said, that it was the wall from her apartment. In other sections of the building, people have moved back in, often to rooms without windows.

Residents in single-family homes in the city are also struggling. Some no longer have functioning gas heaters and are relying on electric space heaters — which themselves are useless during the power cuts that are growing more frequent as Russia targets Ukraine's infrastructure. Others have wood-burning stoves, but the price of firewood is rising countrywide.

Liudmyla Hrybova, 46, lives on the outskirts of Chernihiv with her 6-year-old son, Yaroslav. He plays in the yard while a volunteer takes a chainsaw to trees damaged in the strikes near her home this spring, cutting them up for firewood.

She has a wood-burning stove, but most of her windows are broken and there are holes in the walls after intense shelling this spring. Ms. Hrybova has patched the windows herself with plywood and cardboard.

"But with the situation I have with the windows right now, I am just heating the outside," she said.

The strikes on Ukraine in recent weeks have targeted both electrical infrastructure and thermal power plants, the centralized systems that pump water into pipes that reach houses and large apartment complexes in towns and cities across the country. Severe damage to the pipes or plants can threaten heating throughout the affected areas.

Local governments and international humanitarian organizations are preparing for a tough winter ahead. Vyacheslav Chaus, the head of the Chernihiv Regional Military Administration, said that the region had begun preparing for "heating hubs" — warming tents for residents without heating — but declined to provide further details.

"You can't predict where the next missile attack will be," Mr. Chaus said, making it impossible to ensure the continuation of vital services.

Officials have warned people against seeking out firewood in forest areas that were occupied by Russia, as many areas are still peppered with land mines. But some people, like Ivan Petrovich Polhui, who lives in the village of Yahidne, plans to collect wood despite the warnings.

Mr. Polhui has a working gas-fired boiler, but he is converting it to wood since gas has grown too expensive.

“And there is plenty of wood in the forest,” said Mr. Polhui. “God will save me.”

He has already survived the unthinkable. He was among more than 300 people held by the Russians for weeks in horrifying conditions at a local school. Mr. Polhui, who had worked as a janitor there and was forced into the basement with seven members of his family, said they could only watch as their neighbors died around them.

When the villagers re-emerged from the basement in April, their homes had been left in shambles, ransacked by departing soldiers and damaged in the fighting. Volunteers replaced some windows and local officials made efforts to restore homes, but it hasn’t been enough, residents say.

A few blocks away, Mr. Polhui’s 86-year-old neighbor, Hanna Skrypak — who also survived Russian captivity in the school basement — is now living in her partially destroyed home. The walls appear unsteady after damage from shelling, the wallpaper peeling in long strips.

She has electricity but no heat, a wood stove but sparse firewood. Her windows, nearly all smashed, have been repaired by volunteers, but there are still holes that are only crudely patched. She sits in her ruined home, a tiny figure in layers of coats and a knitted head scarf.

“This is what I am using,” she said, gesturing to an electric heater. “What else can I do? I live alone. I can’t live like this anymore.”

Worries about a cold winter aren’t just confined to areas significantly damaged by fighting during the war. As temperatures drop, even residents of more peaceful pockets of the country worry about the winter ahead.

In central Kyiv, where residents have already experienced blackouts and water cuts, the municipal heating system was turned on this week. Still, after recent strikes on critical infrastructure in the capital, many people are preparing for a winter of heating disruptions.

Yurii Lapko, 38, and his wife live in the small village of Protsiv, a tiny cluster of mostly dacha-style homes, or country cottages, on the banks of the Dnipro River, about an hour south of Kyiv. Like many others, the house was built only for summer use. But during the coronavirus pandemic, they decided to renovate the cottage and make it their permanent home.

When Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February, it was still under renovation, but Mr. Lapko and his mother and her husband fled their apartments in central Kyiv for this country home. They have still not been able to hook up to the town’s gas network to power a boiler, since everything has been slowed by the war, so they use a small electric boiler instead.

They have a backup generator just in case electricity is cut, and they are fitting in a wood-burning stove. Mr. Lapko said that a truckload of firewood costs nearly three times what it did last year, before the Russian invasion, and that everyone in the area had been stocking up on wood.

“And I am sure the prices will keep going up,” he said. “Every new delivery is more expensive.”

A neighbor, Vitalii Zakharchuk, 68, has also been preparing for a difficult winter ahead, stockpiling wood for his traditional wood stove, or hrubka.

“I am worried — it would be unnatural not to worry,” he said, adding: “This is a safe region today, but will it be safe tomorrow?”

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HEADLINE	10/21 Russia masses troops Belarus; new front?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/21/world/europe/ukraine-belarus-russian-troops.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/21/world/europe/ukraine-belarus-russian-troops.html</a>

RIGA, Latvia — Russia is massing thousands of troops in its western neighbor Belarus, raising fears that Moscow might plan to open a new front in its war against Ukraine, but officials from Kyiv to Washington are casting doubt on whether the military buildup represents a serious threat.

With Russia already struggling to defend territory in eastern and southern Ukraine, it can ill afford to pick a new fight on a third front in the north on the border with Belarus, officials and analysts say.

“We have to be cautious, but I doubt that Russians are at this moment capable of opening another front line against Ukraine, at least not a successful front,” Latvia’s defense minister, Artis Pabriks, said on Friday. He said some 10,000 of the Kremlin’s forces were gathering in Belarus, possibly to try to disrupt the flow of Western weapons into Ukraine from Poland.

“They might be able to disrupt something, but it would not be like in February” at the start of Russia’s military onslaught, said Mr. Pabriks, whose country is a NATO member bordering both Belarus and Russia, in an interview in Riga, the Latvian capital. “They are too weak now in my view.”

Britain’s Defense Ministry said in an intelligence assessment on Friday that the flurry of military activity in Belarus is “likely an attempt to demonstrate Russian-Belarusian solidarity and to convince Ukraine to divert forces to guard the northern border.”

Some Western officials say the Russian move is probably just a feint or a training mission, while others say it could be preparation for an attack, though likely not a very effective one, but their views come with a heavy dose of uncertainty.

Those who think a new offensive is possible say it probably would be aimed not at Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital — which the Russians failed to capture with a thrust out of Belarus at the outset of the invasion — but far to the west, near the border with Poland, to disrupt Western shipments of arms and other supplies.

But plunging into western Ukraine near the Polish border would be “very, very risky” for both Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, the strongman leader of Belarus, and for the Kremlin because the region is the traditional “heartland of Ukrainian nationalism,” said Valery Kavaleuski, a former Belarusian diplomat and now a foreign affairs adviser to his country’s exiled opposition movement. “It would be suicidal, a very bad idea but who knows what they might do,” he added.

Ukrainian forces, armed by the United States and others, have been on the offensive since early September, retaking ground the Russians had seized early in the war. Within the NATO alliance, which has closely monitored the ebb and flow of Moscow’s forces, many officials doubt that President Vladimir V. Putin’s military, battered and demoralized by nearly eight months of war, has the will or the means to open a new front.

On Friday there was heavy fighting in Luhansk Province in the east, and there have been signs that the Kremlin may abandon parts of Kherson Province in the south, which would mean the surrender of territory seized at the start of the war and which Mr. Putin last week declared part of the Russian Federation.

Also on Friday, the U.S. defense secretary, Lloyd J. Austin III, and his Russian counterpart, Sergei K. Shoigu, spoke with each other by phone for the first time since May and only the second time since the war began. Their respective offices confirmed in statements that the call took place and dealt with Ukraine, but did not offer any specifics or say whether Belarus was discussed.

Mr. Lukashenko, Belarus’s increasingly Moscow-dependent president, announced last week that his country and Russia were forming a new joint military force, with 70,000 Belarusian troops and up to 15,000 Russians, putatively to guard against NATO.

A Ukrainian general, Oleksiy Gromov, said on Thursday that the threat of a possible invasion from Belarus was growing. But Ukraine’s military intelligence agency does not see an immediate danger, a spokesman, Vadym Skibitsky, said in an interview on Friday.

Several thousand newly mobilized Russian soldiers are deployed in Belarus at training sites, Mr. Skibitsky said, but they are not accompanied by the tanks, artillery or fuel trucks and other logistical support they would need to invade and face Ukraine's battle-hardened troops.

"We see these elements now moving into Belarus, but we do not see the movement of equipment," he said.

Mr. Putin used the territory of Belarus, his closest military and political ally, as a staging ground for his February invasion and his forces have since launched missiles and drones into Ukraine from there. But Mr. Lukashenko has resisted Russian pressure to get more involved in the war.

But Michael R. Carpenter, the United States ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna, cautioned in a telephone interview that Russia and Belarus had both shrouded the purpose of their new joint force in an opaque fog that makes it "hard to say whether there is some sort of operation being prepared from Belarus or this is just an attempt to pin down Ukrainian troops."

The British assessment said it was unlikely that Russia had actually deployed significant forces and added that Belarus "maintains minimal capability to undertake a complex operation."

Air Force Brig. Gen. Patrick S. Ryder, a Pentagon spokesman, also played down the likelihood of a Russian invasion from Belarus: "We don't currently have any indications of a potential imminent military action on that front," he told a briefing Thursday.

Many Western and Ukrainian officials believe that Belarus's primary role will be to help Russia train new draftees, many of whom have no military experience, before sending them to Ukraine.

Russia's own training facilities have been stretched to the breaking point since Mr. Putin last month ordered the conscription of as many as 300,000 troops to prop up his faltering war effort. Some draftees have been dispatched to the front lines with minimal preparation; some have already been killed.

Mr. Lukashenko has held power for 28 years thanks to support from Moscow, while fending off a yearslong push by Mr. Putin to, in effect, merge their countries, ending Belarus's independence.

Mr. Pabriks, the Latvian defense minister, said Mr. Lukashenko was "moving things to the left, moving things to the right, pretending that he is doing stuff but obviously the Russian tide is against him."

"Lukashenko is trying to maneuver in an increasingly narrow space. Obviously Putin is trying to bring Belarus more into his war against Ukraine, but Lukashenko understands that would be the end of his time if he did this," Mr. Pabriks said.

Mr. Lukashenko, he added, had become so dependent on Russia for his own political survival that "Russia controls his country and we should assume probably that there will be more involvement from the Belarusian side against the Ukrainians, but I very much doubt that this would bring large benefits to Russia."

On a visit Thursday to the western region of Brest, near the border with Poland, Mr. Lukashenko inspected Belarusian-made drones and other military equipment, declaring that it would be "undesirable" for such equipment to be used in Ukraine, the state news agency Belta reported. He referred to Ukrainians as "our own people," echoing Mr. Putin's line that the people of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are one Slavic nation divided by the machinations of the West.

Mr. Lukashenko, according to Belta, also said that Belarusians must ignore what he described as "wailing" about his government starting a clandestine mobilization drive, adding that it was necessary for troops to train "but no war today. We don't need one."

He made a similar statement in February just days before Russia invaded Ukraine from his territory.

	On Friday, Ukraine's armed forces said in a statement that if the country were attacked it would "respond as fiercely as we respond to all occupiers." It also said that, in the event that troops from Belarus were ordered to attack, they should disobey their leaders and surrender.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Russia turns children into spoils of war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/world/europe/ukraine-children-russia-adoptions.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/22/world/europe/ukraine-children-russia-adoptions.html</a>
GIST	<p>As Russian forces laid siege to the Ukrainian city of Mariupol this spring, children fled bombed-out group homes and boarding schools. Separated from their families, they followed neighbors or strangers heading west, seeking the relative safety of central Ukraine.</p> <p>Instead, at checkpoints around the city, pro-Russia forces intercepted them, according to interviews with the children, witnesses and family members. The authorities put them on buses headed deeper into Russian-held territory.</p> <p>"I didn't want to go," said Anya, 14, who escaped a home for tuberculosis patients in Mariupol and is now with a foster family near Moscow. "But nobody asked me."</p> <p>In the rush to flee, she said, she left behind a sketchbook containing her mother's phone number. All she could remember were the first three digits.</p> <p>Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February, Russian authorities have announced with patriotic fanfare the transfer of thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia to be adopted and become citizens. On state-run television, officials offer teddy bears to new arrivals, who are portrayed as abandoned children being rescued from war.</p> <p>In fact, this mass transfer of children is a potential war crime, regardless of whether they were orphans. And while many of the children did come from orphanages and group homes, the authorities also took children whose relatives or guardians want them back, according to interviews with children and families on both sides of the border.</p> <p>As Russian troops pushed into Ukraine, children like Anya who were fleeing newly occupied territories were swept up. Some were taken after their parents had been killed or imprisoned by Russian troops, according to local Ukrainian officials.</p> <p>This systematic resettlement is part of a broader strategy by the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin, to treat Ukraine as a part of Russia and cast his illegal invasion as a noble cause. His government has used children — including the sick, poor and orphaned — as part of a propaganda campaign presenting Russia as a charitable savior.</p> <p>Through interviews with parents, officials, doctors and children in Ukraine and Russia, The New York Times identified several children who had been taken away. Some returned home. Others, like Anya, remain in Russia.</p> <p>The Times interviewed Anya several times through instant messages, exchanged voice memos with her and verified key details through her friends, photographs and a journal she kept identifying other children she had been with. She asked reporters not to contact her foster parents, who had told her not to talk to outsiders.</p> <p>Anya had lived apart from her mother and was in only sporadic contact with her before the war. Without the phone number, Anya said she could not reach her.</p> <p>At first, reporters could not, either.</p>

The Times is not identifying Anya's full name. A shy girl with a passion for drawing, she said that her Russian foster family treated her well but that she ached to return to Ukraine. Soon, though, she said she would become a Russian citizen. "I don't want to," she said. "My friends and family aren't here."

Anya and others described a wrenching process of coercion, deception and force as children were shipped to Russia from Ukraine. Together, their accounts add to a growing body of evidence from governments and news reports about a removal-and-adoption policy that targets the most vulnerable children in the most dangerous situations.

Transferring people out of an occupied territory can be a war crime, and experts say the practice is especially thorny when it involves children, who may not be able to consent. Ukrainian officials accuse Russia of perpetrating a genocide. The forced transfer of children, when intended to destroy a national group, is an act of genocide under international law.

Russian officials have made clear that their goal is to replace any childhood attachment to home with a love for Russia.

Russia's commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, has organized the transfers and said that she herself adopted a teenager from Mariupol. Ms. Lvova-Belova, who is under Western sanctions, said the boy had been homesick at first and even attended a demonstration supporting Ukraine.

"He was yearning for the house in which he grew up, friends and his dear Mariupol," she wrote on Telegram. But the children soon come to appreciate their new home, she said.

The exact number of resettled children is not clear. Russian authorities did not respond to questions from The Times. Ukrainian authorities said they did not have an accurate count, but placed the figure in the thousands.

In April, Russian authorities announced that more than 2,000 children had arrived in Russia. Most came from group homes and orphanages in territory long occupied by Russia. Russian officials said that 100 had come from recently occupied areas. In the following months, they announced hundreds of new arrivals.

While the resettlement of children from newly occupied lands has so far been sporadic, the Russian government recently announced plans to resettle these children more efficiently, raising the prospect of many more transfers.

Russia's wartime tactic exploits some of the thorniest and most intimate family dynamics. Russian families spoke of adoption as a matter of patriotism, but also expressed a heartfelt desire to provide a better life for the children. And while many Ukrainian parents try to recover their children, others do not, whether for financial reasons or because their relationships were severed even before the war.

In the Siberian city of Salekhard along the Arctic Circle, Olga Druzhinina said she adopted four children, aged 6 to 17, from around the Ukrainian city of Donetsk more than 1,600 miles away. Russia recently illegally annexed the Donetsk region and three others in eastern and southern Ukraine.

"Our family is like a small Russia," Ms. Druzhinina said in an interview. "Russia took in four territories, and the Druzhinin family took in four children."

She said she was awaiting a fifth child and considered the children fully Russian. "We are not taking what is not ours," she said.

### **'They Simply Took Away All the Children'**

Anya was living and recovering from tuberculosis in a group home on a wooded campus with a red swing set. As explosions blew out the building's windows and doors, the children fled to the basement. Anya read fairy tales to the youngest ones and passed the time by drawing.

Children in government homes are often labeled orphans, but most do have families. Ukraine makes it easy for parents struggling with illness, substance abuse or financial hardships to place their children — temporarily or permanently — in state-run institutions. The United Nations estimated that about 90,000 children were in such homes across Ukraine before the war.

Many parents rescued their children from Anya's building. Others did not, whether because they could not make their way through the war zone or, like Anya's mother, they were unreachable.

A Ukrainian volunteer crammed Anya and the 20 or so remaining children into an ambulance bound for the city of Zaporizhzhia, other children recalled. But they were rerouted at a Russian checkpoint, they said, and ended up with dozens of children at a hospital in the city of Donetsk, the capital of a region that Russia has occupied since 2014.

This region is the heart of Russia's removal-and-adoption policy. Since the invasion began, Mr. Putin's government has promoted the systematic transfer of children from the area's orphanages and group homes.

For Anya and others taken from newly occupied territories in Ukraine, Donetsk also served as a sort of way station en route to Moscow.

Ivan Matkovsky, 16, said he, too, ended up in a Donetsk hospital after fleeing a government boarding school in Mariupol and being rerouted at a Russian checkpoint.

Among the other children in the hospital, Ivan said, was an 8-year-old boy named Nazar, who had hidden with his mother in a Mariupol theater that was pummeled by airstrikes in one of the war's defining atrocities. He survived but never found his mother.

Local authorities around Mariupol told similar stories of children who survived the Russian assault and ended up at nearby hospitals. One toddler arrived in a stroller along with a handwritten note that read, "This is Misha. Please help him!" said Vasyl Mitko, an official in the town of Nikolske who helped at the hospital.

But one by one, Mr. Mitko said, the children vanished. "They simply took away all the children who were left without parents," he said. "We still do not know where these children are."

#### **'We Will Show You Moscow'**

Ukrainian parents who managed to locate their children in Donetsk, gather the right paperwork and contact the right people had a chance at reunification. But even then, children and parents say, the authorities pressured children to go to Russia voluntarily.

"They were promised a new, wonderful life," said Natalia, a foster mother from Mariupol. Her 15-year-old foster son agreed to go to Russia, she said. She asked not to be identified by her full name because she worried it would make it harder to get him back. "These are children of a difficult fate," she said. "They are easily deceived."

Timofey Chmel, 17, who was in the Donetsk hospital with Anya, said the authorities promised lives of leisure and love in Moscow.

"We were told: 'If you need gadgets or clothes, just tell us. We will buy everything. If you want, you can just go and relax. We will show you Moscow,'" he said. "'If your parents abandoned you, they do not need you. We will help you.'"

Timofey refused and was later reunited with his foster mother. Ivan, the 16-year-old boarding school student, said he and one of his schoolmates managed to contact their school's headmaster, their legal guardian, and arrange their return.



When children had nobody to call, or when parents were unable or unwilling to brave the journey to Donetsk, the children were given no choice.

While Ivan was waiting for the headmaster to pick him up, he said, the other children were put on a bus for Russia. They protested. “No one listened to them,” Ivan said. “They had no choice.”

Ivan is still in contact with three of the children in Russia. He does not know what became of Nazar, the boy who survived the theater attack.

Anya, too, had no choice. She said a doctor told her that she would rest in an institution in the Moscow region for three weeks. That was months ago.

“I was just told,” she said. “And that was it.”

### **‘Our Little Fellow Citizens’**

The Russian government carefully choreographs the pipeline from the Donetsk region to Moscow.

“Now you are at home, in a circle of friends,” the Russia-imposed mayor of Donetsk told a group of boys from Mariupol. He shared a video of the moment on Telegram.

Russian officials in Donetsk invite reporters into group homes to witness children receiving cellphones, gifts and clothes. State-run television airs the children’s arrival in Moscow by train.

Mr. Putin instituted a streamlined process in May allowing the swift nationalization of Ukrainian children. The first group became Russian citizens in July, officials announced.

“I did not recognize those kids with whom we traveled in April on the train to their new life,” Ksenia Mishonova, the children’s rights commissioner for the Moscow region, said in a statement. “Now they are our little fellow citizens!”

Some children were indeed orphaned or abandoned in Ukraine and prefer their lives in Russia. The Times spoke to one teenager from Mariupol who said he had no family back home. He said his foster family loved him like he was their own.

Others, like Anya, long to return.

She participated in a weekly class called Conversations About Important Things. The half-hour lesson, introduced recently by Mr. Putin, teaches children to be proud of Russia.

Sometimes, Anya said, she cries, wondering if something horrible has happened to her family.

After more than a month of reporting, Times reporters reached Anya’s mother, Oksana, in Ukraine. With no job, no internet access, a small disability pension and a war going on, she said she had no idea how to find her daughter.

“I’m looking everywhere, but I can’t find her,” she said. “She is looking for me.”

She said she did not know that Anya had been taken to Russia.

Reporters told Anya and Oksana how to contact each other. The prospect of Anya returning home, though, is unclear. Ukrainian officials have been tight-lipped about how they have gotten dozens of children back from Russia.

“Is this really her number?” Anya asked.

HEADLINE	10/22 Kremlin rages: US arrests Putin insider son
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/kremlin-rages-after-son-of-russian-governor-alexander-uss-is-arrested-in-italy-over-us-charges?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/kremlin-rages-after-son-of-russian-governor-alexander-uss-is-arrested-in-italy-over-us-charges?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">The Kremlin</a> is threatening retaliatory action after authorities arrested Artyom Uss, the son of a top Russian official, at the United States' request, for allegedly participating in a sanctions evasion and money laundering scheme.</p> <p>Uss, who was detained in Milan, was charged in relation to a scheme to unlawfully obtain <a href="#">U.S. military technology</a> and sanctioned Venezuelan oil in order to support <a href="#">Russia's war effort in Ukraine</a>, according to charges unsealed by the U.S. Department of Justice this week.</p> <p>"We are categorically against this and we condemn the practice of these kinds of arrests of Russian citizens," Kremlin spokesman <a href="#">Dmitry Peskov</a> said.</p> <p>Uss' father, the governor of Russia's Krasnoyarsk Krai region, Alexander Uss, has suggested the arrest is politically motivated, according to <a href="#">TASS</a>.</p> <p>Another Russian government spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, said Moscow would not leave the United States' search for Russians "unanswered" and accused the U.S. of "taking hostages for political purposes," TASS reported.</p> <p>Uss wasn't the only one charged in the money laundering and smuggling scheme. Uss co-owned a trading company called Nord-Deutsche Industrienanlagenbau GmbH (NDA GmbH) which he and co-conspirators allegedly used as a front to ship U.S. defense technology to Russia.</p> <p>Uss and co-conspirators are accused of using NDA GmbH to ship advanced semiconductors and microprocessors for fighter aircraft, missile systems, smart munitions, radar, and satellites to Russia—some have been found in weapons used in the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>"Some of the same electronic components obtained through the criminal scheme have been found in Russian weapons platforms seized on the battlefield in Ukraine," the Department of Justice said in an announcement, adding that the accused developed a "sophisticated network" of schemes that "undermined security, economic stability and rule of law around the world."</p> <p>The group of co-conspirators also allegedly shipped hundreds of millions of barrels of oil from Venezuela to Russian and Chinese entities, including at least one sanctioned oligarch.</p> <p>The 12-count indictment charged five Russian nationals in total, including Yury Orekhov, Svetlana Kuzurgasheva, Timofey Telegin, and Sergey Tulyakov. Juan Fernando Serrano Ponce and Juan Carlos Soto were also charged with setting up illegal oil deals for Venezuelan state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela S.A.</p> <p>One of the co-conspirators openly acknowledged that NDA GmbH was working for a sanctioned oligarch, according to court documents.</p> <p>"He [the oligarch] is under sanctions as well," Orekhov said. "That's why we [are] acting from this company [NDA GmbH]. As fronting."</p> <p>Russia has long helped Venezuela evade sanctions around the globe. But the latest charges expose the multiple layers of sanctions the United States has imposed on both Russia and Venezuela.</p> <p>The United States has been sanctioning Venezuela for more than 15 years, and in recent years has imposed restrictions on Venezuela's state oil company and other entities in order to try to pressure Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro to leave power.</p>

	<p>Sanctions on Russian banks in recent months, which the United States and other nations have levied in an attempt to try to isolate Moscow on the world stage while it assaults Ukraine, have likely <a href="#">hurt Venezuela's ability to access its assets</a>, according to the Congressional Research Service. But <a href="#">higher oil prices</a> from Russia's invasion of Ukraine appear to be driving a semblance of economic recovery for Venezuela, according to the CRS.</p> <p>Task Force KleptoCapture, the Department of Justice group established earlier this year with the aim of punishing Russia for the war in Ukraine and enforcing sanctions on Russian oligarchs, announced the charges alongside other DOJ entities.</p> <p>"Stamping out evasion of export controls on military technology is among the Task Force's highest priorities," Andrew Adams, the director of Task Force KleptoCapture, said in a statement. "Webs of shell companies, cryptocurrency and an international network of fraudsters failed to shield Orekhov and his cronies from apprehension by U.S. law enforcement."</p> <p>It's not clear what Russia will be doing in response to Uss' arrest.</p> <p>When asked Thursday if Uss' arrest is related at all to the negotiations to release Brittney Griner from Russia, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre declined to speculate.</p> <p>"The President is willing... to take extraordinary lengths to bring Americans home," Jean-Pierre said in a briefing with reporters.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 King Co. program: fentanyl testing strips</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/king-county-public-health-launches-program-to-distribute-fentanyl-testing-strips-narcan#">https://komonews.com/news/local/king-county-public-health-launches-program-to-distribute-fentanyl-testing-strips-narcan#</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A new tool is being used in King County to help fight the staggering number of deaths from fentanyl overdoses. Families in western Washington who have lost loved ones are also calling on state leaders to do more to save lives.</p> <p>Kirk Evers lost his son Cole, 17, to a fentanyl overdose on April 6, 2020, in Indiana. The former Skyline High School student didn't know the street drugs he was given were laced with fentanyl.</p> <p>"These are our children," said Evers. "They're serial killers and were not taking this serious enough, this should be a priority."</p> <p>The Washington State Health Department (DOH) said drugs mixed with fentanyl are quickly becoming the leading cause of overdose deaths in our state. This year alone, fentanyl was involved in 67% of all drug overdose death and 89% of all opioid-related overdose deaths, according to DOH.</p> <p>Part of the problem is people can't see it, taste it, or smell it.</p> <p>That's why fentanyl testing strips are gaining momentum around the country to prevent overdose deaths and there's a new push to make them more widely available, but there are challenges.</p> <p>"It is in everything right now. There is not a single drug that it is not in," said Peer Seattle Director Christopher Archiopoli.</p> <p><a href="#">At Peer Seattle in Capitol Hill</a>, people can now get fentanyl testing strips and Narcan from vending machines. It's part of a pilot program from Public Health Seattle &amp; King County that began a few months ago. The test strips are dipped into drug residue dissolved in water and within minutes, a person can know whether the drug contains fentanyl.</p>

	<p>Archiopoli said the test strips are a valuable harm reduction tool but not a solution for those with addiction.</p> <p>“The biggest danger with fentanyl is there’s not a big difference between having fun and death,” said Archiopoli. “The difference between one grain of sand and three grains of sand can be the difference between living and dying. So, people don’t necessarily know how much they’re using in the moment.”</p> <p>The DOH had a pilot project that distributed 40,000 fentanyl kits in 2018, but funding ran out last year and now there isn’t currently a program at the state level.</p> <p>Another challenge for the testing strips is the law. Republican State Sen. Jim Honeyford had pushed a bill to exempt fentanyl testing equipment from being defined as drug paraphernalia.</p> <p>The Senate Bill 5509 passed unanimously in the Senate, but officials said it died in the house this year. Since this is the second year of the two-year legislative term, the language would have to be reintroduced as a new bill in 2023.</p> <p>KOMO News asked if anything is there more the state should be doing in this fight.</p> <p>“I think any tool that saves a life is worth funding. Even if it saves one life. It’s worth the effort,” said Archiopoli. “The best thing that we can do is continue to invest in education and helping people to bring their lives past addiction.”</p> <p>As the fight continues, Evers said warning others of the dangers while pushing for more protection helps honor the lives lost to the drug.</p> <p>“This is fentanyl, you will die,” said Evers. “Love your kids every second you got them.”</p>
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HEADLINE	10/21 King Co. ‘unprecedented rise’ RSV cases
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/rsv-cases-king-county-rise/281-39dc6773-3935-46e2-acd2-e5da8e7b31c0">https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/rsv-cases-king-county-rise/281-39dc6773-3935-46e2-acd2-e5da8e7b31c0</a>
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — There has been a rise in Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) cases in King County.</p> <p><a href="#">King County Health</a> said they are expecting a particularly bad RSV season this year due to the effects of the pandemic. As social distancing measures are rolling back, people are being exposed to more viruses than they have in recent years and are often more susceptible because they haven’t been exposed recently.</p> <p>The virus is especially risky for young children, older adults and people with underlying conditions.</p> <p>Dr. Russell Migita with Seattle Children’s Hospital said they are seeing “unprecedented volumes” of cases. They are seeing about 20 to 30 positive cases every day, and that number is expected to increase going into late fall and winter.</p> <p>There is no vaccination to protect against RSV. But, getting a seasonal flu shot and updated COVID booster will be important to help keep the community safe, according to King County Health.</p> <p><b>Why are those vaccines important?</b></p> <p>People can become infected with multiple viruses like COVID, flu and RSV at the same time or back-to-back. This weakens your body and makes you more prone to serious outcomes and hospitalization. So, protecting yourself and your children against flu and COVID will help your bodies better defend against RSV.</p>

King County Health also said the healthcare system in western Washington is currently fragile. Getting vaccinated will help reduce the need for hospitalization.

### RSV Symptoms

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), people who have been infected with RSV usually show symptoms within four to six days. Those symptoms include:

- Runny nose
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

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Read more about RSV, including how it's cared for, [on the CDC's website](#).

HEADLINE	<b>10/21 OR sheriff arrests USFS burn boss over fire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/10/21/oregon-arrest-forest-service-fire/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/10/21/oregon-arrest-forest-service-fire/</a>
GIST	<p>When U.S. Forest Service personnel started a prescribed burn in a national forest in rural Oregon on Wednesday, Tonna and Mandy Holliday were scared. The sisters, who run the Windy Point Cattle Co., lived nearby and knew conditions were dry.</p> <p>By the end of the day, the prescribed burn escaped the Malheur National Forest, jumped over county road 63, and burned up a swath of their timber land and grazing pasture. They called 911 and soon the U.S. Forest Service burn boss was on his way to jail.</p> <p>The arrest of a Forest Service employee is exceedingly rare, according to former Forest Service officials and other experts, and it has become a fresh source of tension in a part of the country with a history of animosity toward the federal government.</p> <p>The sheriff's office in Grant County, Oregon, on Wednesday arrested Rick Snodgrass, a 39-year-old Forest Service employee, for "reckless burning" after a prescribed fire in the Malheur National Forest burned onto the Hollidays' ranch. Temperatures exceeded 70 degrees that afternoon, and Sheriff Todd McKinley told Wildfire Today that "everybody knew it was a bad burn [and] should not be happening."</p> <p>"It was not the right time to burn, and there may have even been means taken to get that burn done that were outside the scope," McKinley said.</p> <p>Snodgrass, who was taken to Grant County Jail and later conditionally released, was "conducting an approved prescribed fire operation," a Forest Service spokesman said in a statement, while declining to comment further, citing the pending legal matter. Snodgrass could not be immediately reached for comment.</p> <p>On Friday, Glenn Casamassa, the Forest Service's regional forester for the Pacific Northwest, wrote to employees that he couldn't go into specifics about the incident but that "I want each of you to know that [at] all times he [Snodgrass], and the entire team that engaged on the Starr prescribed fire, had, and continues to have, our full support."</p> <p>"I spoke with the Burn Boss last night and expressed my support for him and the actions he took in leading the prescribed burn," Casamassa added in the email, which was obtained by The Washington Post. "In addition, I let him know it's my expectation that the Forest Service will continue to support him throughout any legal actions."</p> <p>Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter said in a statement that the county dispatch center began receiving 911 calls at about 4:50 p.m. on Wednesday reporting an out of control burn along the Izee Highway in Bear Valley.</p>

“This case will be evaluated once the investigation is complete, and if appropriate, Snodgrass will formally be charged,” Carpenter said. “To be clear, the employer and/or position of Snodgrass will not protect him if it is determined that he acted recklessly. That the USFS was engaging in a prescribed burn may actually raise, rather than lower the standard to which Snodgrass will be held.”

“Many will attempt to hype this into something that it is not,” Carpenter added. “The question is whether one neighbor, given the prevailing conditions, was reckless when starting fires adjacent to another neighbor.”

Some former Forest Service officials were alarmed by Wednesday’s arrest, particularly in this part of Oregon. The Starr 6 prescribed burn took place outside of the town of Seneca. In 2016, a group of armed right-wing extremists led by Ammon Bundy occupied the headquarters of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, about 75 miles to the south, as part of a protest against the federal government’s control of public land in the West.

Steve Ellis, the chair of the National Association of Forest Service Retirees, said he had never heard of a Forest Service employee being arrested for doing prescribed fire.

“To go out and start arresting people is not appropriate. And it sends a terrible signal to our wildland fire people out there now,” he said. “There needs to be more fuels treatment on the landscape in order to protect communities from these climate driven wildfires, and that includes Grant County, Oregon. To react like this is not going to help.”

Ellis, who has worked in small towns in the Pacific Northwest during his career with the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, said this part of Oregon has “been an anti-federal government pocket as long as I can remember.”

“To be a successful as a Forest Supervisor in that area, you really have to ‘work’ the community, including attending high school football and basketball games, Rotary Club, etc.,” Ellis said.

Doug Gochmour, who served as forest supervisor in the Malheur National Forest from 2008 to 2011, said he had no knowledge about this particular burn but he was “stunned that somebody got arrested.”

“It was by far the most challenging location through my career and I worked in two forests in Oregon, three in Idaho, one in Montana, and for short spurts in Colorado and Alaska,” said Gochmour, who also served on the city council of nearby John Day, Ore., after he retired. “People were constantly sniping at all the decisions we made.”

Gochmour said he faced resentment about the decline of the timber industry that had once sustained the community and about the salaries that Forest Service employees received. Good work was ignored, he said, but “if something remotely negative happens ... that rumor spreads like wildfire.”

“It’s not the whole community,” he added. “It’s sort of a culture from some of the old-timers that they’ve spread to their children and so forth, an animosity against the federal government.”

The intentional fires regularly set by the Forest Service — intended to clear vegetation that can lead to more destructive blazes — have on occasion burned out of control. Two fires lit this year in New Mexico grew into the largest wildfire in state history while destroying hundreds of homes. Hotter and dryer conditions out West have made these prescribed fires even trickier — narrowing the window when they can be done safely.

Firefighters and land managers across the West are pushing for more prescribed burns as a way to burn off the type of fuels that can supercharge forest fires and threaten communities. The Forest Service conducts on average about 4,500 prescribed burns per year and the vast majority stay within their intended boundaries.

National Park Service officials credit prescribed fires among a famous grove of giant sequoias in Yosemite National Park for helping to save the trees during a wildfire this summer.

The Forest Service on Thursday wrote on Twitter that the Starr 6 prescribed fire caused a “spot fire” on private land. This occurs when embers fly into the distance and start new fires, sometimes miles away.

“It was caught within an hour at approximately 18 acres,” the Forest Service said.

The Holliday sisters said in an interview that the nearby Silvies River was running dry and a prior attempt at a burn the week before had shown spotting behavior — with embers flying toward private property.

They estimated that 40 acres of their land burned. None of the structures on their ranch, or their hundreds of cattle, were harmed.

“To us, it was devastating to have any of your ground burn up,” Tonna Holliday said.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Portland to ban homeless camps on streets</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Oregon-mayor-to-ban-homeless-camps-on-Portland-17526128.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Oregon-mayor-to-ban-homeless-camps-on-Portland-17526128.php</a>
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The mayor of Portland, Oregon, plans to ban camping on city streets and move unhoused people to designated campsites, as the growing homeless population has become the top concern for the vast majority of residents.</p> <p>“The magnitude and the depth of the homeless crisis in our city is nothing short of a humanitarian catastrophe,” Mayor Ted Wheeler said Friday. “We need to move our scattered, vulnerable homeless population closer to the services that they need.”</p> <p>The resolution would establish at least three large, designated outdoor camping sites, with the first opening within 18 months of securing funding. Wheeler didn't specify when the funding would be confirmed or how much the measure would cost.</p> <p>The designated camping sites would initially be able to serve up to 125 people and would provide access to services such as food, hygiene, litter collection and treatment for mental health and substance abuse, Wheeler said. The sites could eventually serve 500 people.</p> <p>Oregon's homelessness crisis has been fueled by a housing shortage, the coronavirus pandemic and drug addiction.</p> <p>More than 3,000 people are living without shelter in Portland, a 50% jump from 2019, and there are more than 700 encampments across the city, Wheeler said.</p> <p>The resolution is one of several that Wheeler plans to introduce in the City Council next week in a bid to address the city's homelessness and affordable housing crises.</p> <p>Under the measures, social workers would direct people camping on the street to the city's designated camping sites. Police could arrest or cite people if they refuse to leave, Wheeler said. But the citations could be waived as part of a “services diversion program” that would allow people cited for low-level offenses, such as violating the camping ban, to receive mental health or substance abuse treatment instead of jail time.</p> <p>Scott Kerman, executive director of Blanchet House, a Portland nonprofit that provides social services for people experiencing homelessness, said the plan “has some positive elements” but that “there remain a lot of unanswered questions and unknown details,” particularly regarding the enforcement provision. Some</p>



unhoused people are resistant to living in large group environments due to previous negative experiences, he said.

“We’re serving people that even in the most extreme winter and summer weather conditions will not seek out emergency shelter because they have such PTSD and anxiety about congregate shelter,” Kerman told The Associated Press in a phone interview, referring to post-traumatic stress disorder. “They have felt unsafe in those environments. They may have even been victimized in those environments.”

Kerman also expressed concern that the criminal justice and mental health systems, already overwhelmed in Oregon, may buckle under the added strain amid a shortage of hospital staff, psychiatric beds and public defenders.

“Our state hospital, our local hospitals, our county jails are already filled past capacity with people on mental health holds who are in the criminal justice system,” he said.

A federal judge ruled last month that the Oregon State Hospital must limit the amount of time it can hold patients charged with crimes, in a bid to create space at the overcrowded facility for criminal defendants who need mental health treatment but are housed in jails.

Meanwhile, an ongoing public defender shortage due to workload, poor pay and late payments prompted criminal defendants to sue the state this year, saying it is violating their constitutional right to legal counsel and a speedy trial.

The Portland City Council declared a state of emergency on homelessness in 2015 and has extended it five times since then. The measure, set to expire in 2025, reduces the bureaucratic hurdles surrounding the creation of homeless shelters.

This year alone, Wheeler has issued four emergency declarations to address homelessness issues. Most recently in August, he expanded a declaration that prohibits camping along high-speed corridors such as highways to include key walking routes to K-12 schools.

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## Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	10/21 Social media platforms brace for mayhem
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/2022-midterm-elections-technology-voting-8db19582a2a2c1b0dfc2b762b0a10904">https://apnews.com/article/2022-midterm-elections-technology-voting-8db19582a2a2c1b0dfc2b762b0a10904</a>
GIST	<p>A Facebook search for the words “election fraud” first delivers an article claiming that workers at a Pennsylvania children’s museum are brainwashing children so they’ll accept stolen elections.</p> <p>Facebook’s second suggestion? A link to an article from a site called MAGA Underground that says Democrats are plotting to rig next month’s midterms. “You should still be mad as hell about <a href="#">the fraud that happened in 2020</a>,” the article insists.</p> <p>With less than three weeks before the polls close, <a href="#">misinformation</a> about voting and elections abounds on social media despite promises by tech companies to address a problem blamed for increasing <a href="#">polarization</a> and <a href="#">distrust</a>.</p> <p>While platforms like <a href="#">Twitter</a>, <a href="#">TikTok</a>, <a href="#">Facebook</a> and YouTube say they’ve expanded their work to detect and stop harmful claims that could suppress the vote or even lead to <a href="#">violent confrontations</a>, a review of some of the sites shows they’re still playing catch-up with 2020, when then-President <a href="#">Donald Trump’s lies</a> about <a href="#">the election he lost to Joe Biden</a> helped fuel <a href="#">an insurrection at the U.S. Capitol</a>.</p> <p>“You would think that they would have <a href="#">learned by now</a>,” said Heidi Beirich, founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism and a member of a group called the Real Facebook Oversight Board that has</p>

criticized the platform's efforts. "This isn't their first election. This should have been addressed before Trump lost in 2020. The damage is pretty deep at this point."

If these U.S.-based tech giants can't properly prepare for a U.S. election, how can anyone expect them to handle [overseas elections](#), Beirich said.

Mentions of a "[stolen election](#)" and "voter fraud" have soared in recent months and are now two of the three most popular terms included in discussions of this year's election, according to an analysis of social media, online and broadcast content conducted by media intelligence firm Signal Labs on behalf of The Associated Press.

On [Twitter](#), Signal's analysis found that tweets amplifying conspiracy theories about the upcoming election have been reposted many thousands of times, alongside posts restating debunked claims about the 2020 election.

Most major platforms have announced steps intended to curb misinformation about voting and elections, including [labels](#), [warnings](#) and changes to systems that automatically recommend certain content. Users who consistently violate the rules can be suspended. Platforms have also created partnerships with fact-checking organizations and [news outlets like the AP](#), which is part of Meta's fact-checking program.

"Our teams continue to monitor the midterms closely, working to quickly remove content that violates our policies," YouTube said in a statement. "We'll stay vigilant ahead of, during, and after Election Day."

Meta, the owner of [Facebook](#) and Instagram, announced this week that it had reopened its [election command center](#), which oversees real-time efforts to combat misinformation about elections. The company dismissed criticism that it's [not doing enough](#) and denied reports that it has cut the number of staffers focused on elections.

"We are investing a significant amount of resources, with work spanning more than 40 teams and hundreds of people," Meta said in a statement emailed to the AP.

The platform also said that starting this week, anyone who searches on Facebook using keywords related to the election, including "election fraud," will automatically see a pop-up window with links to trustworthy voting resources.

TikTok created an election center earlier this year to help voters in the U.S. learn how to register to vote and who's on their ballot. The information is offered in English, Spanish and more than 45 other languages. The platform, now [a leading source of information for young voters](#), also adds labels to [misleading content](#).

"Providing access to authoritative information is an important part of our overall strategy to counter election misinformation," the company said of its efforts to prepare for the midterms.

But policies intended to stop [harmful misinformation about elections](#) aren't always enforced consistently. False claims can often be buried deep in the [comments section](#), for instance, where they nonetheless can leave an impression on other users.

A report released last month from New York University faulted Meta, Twitter, [TikTok](#) and [YouTube](#) for amplifying [Trump's false statements](#) about [the 2020 election](#). The study cited inconsistent rules regarding misinformation as well as poor [enforcement](#).

[Concerned about the amount of misinformation](#) about voting and elections, a number of groups have urged tech companies to do more.

	<p>“Americans deserve more than <a href="#">lip service and half-measures</a> from the platforms,” said Yosef Getachew, director of Common Cause’s media and democracy program. “These platforms have been weaponized by enemies of democracy, both foreign and domestic.”</p> <p>Election misinformation is even more prevalent on smaller platforms popular with some conservatives and far-right groups like Gab, Gettr and TruthSocial, Trump’s own platform. But those sites have tiny audiences compared with Facebook, YouTube or TikTok.</p> <p>Beirich’s group, the Real Facebook Oversight Board, crafted a list of seven recommendations for Meta intended to reduce the spread of misinformation ahead of the elections. They included changes to the platform that would promote content from legitimate news outlets over partisan sites that often spread misinformation, as well as greater attention on misinformation <a href="#">targeting voters in Spanish</a> and other languages.</p> <p>Meta told the AP it has expanded its fact-checking network since 2020 and now has twice as many Spanish-language fact checkers. The company also launched a Spanish-language fact-checking tip line on WhatsApp, another platform it owns.</p> <p>Much of the misinformation aimed at <a href="#">non-English speakers</a> seems aimed at suppressing their vote, said Brenda Victoria Castillo, CEO of the National Hispanic Media Coalition, who said that the efforts by Facebook and other platforms aren’t equal to the scale of the problem posed by misinformation.</p> <p>“We are being lied to and discouraged from exercising our right to vote,” Castillo said. “And people in power, people like (Meta CEO) <a href="#">Mark Zuckerberg</a> are doing very little while they <a href="#">profit from the disinformation</a>.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Russians against Putin: NRA claims hack</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/russians-against-putin-nra-claims-massive-hack-of-russian-government-contractors-computers/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/cybersecurity/russians-against-putin-nra-claims-massive-hack-of-russian-government-contractors-computers/</a>
GIST	<p>In perhaps one of the largest IT-security breaches in Russian history, <i>Kyiv Post</i> was contacted on Oct. 17 by hackers who indicated that they were supporters of the Russian NRA. As <i>Kyiv Post</i> has previously reported, the NRA is an organization of Russian opposition members seeking the overthrow of the Putin regime, including via the use of violent means.</p> <p>The NRA-affiliates told <i>Kyiv Post</i> that they had hacked several major Russian technology firms that are currently providing services critical to the Russian Government’s national security. The hackers provided <i>Kyiv Post</i> with exclusive access to a large volume of documents and photos which they said came from the internal servers of companies which the NRA-hackers believe are making Russia’s war possible.</p> <p>One of the reportedly hacked businesses is Technoserv – Russia’s largest systems integrator – which operates in various countries in a consultancy capacity.</p>
	<a href="#">Return to Top</a> <a href="#">Read more at Kyiv Post</a>

HEADLINE	<b>10/24 Ransomware in education on the rise</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/why-ransomware-in-education-on-rise-and.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/why-ransomware-in-education-on-rise-and.html</a>
GIST	<p>The breach of LA Unified School District (LAUSD) highlights the prevalence of password vulnerabilities, as criminal hackers continue to use breached credentials in increasingly frequent ransomware attacks on education.</p> <p>The Labor Day weekend breach of LAUSD brought significant <a href="#">districtwide disruptions to access to email</a>, computers, and applications. It's unclear what student or employee data the attackers exfiltrated.</p>

There is a significant trend in ransomware breaches in education, a highly vulnerable sector. The transitory nature of students leaves accounts and passwords vulnerable. The open environments schools create to foster student exploration and the relative naivete in the sector regarding cybersecurity invite attacks.

### **The breach at LAUSD and what happened afterward**

Four days post-breach, reports came that criminals had offered credentials for accounts inside the school district's network [for sale on the dark web](#) months before the attack. The stolen credentials included email addresses with the suffix @lausd.net as the usernames and breached passwords.

LAUSD responded in its update that "compromised email credentials reportedly found on nefarious websites were [unrelated to this attack](#), as attested by federal investigative agencies." The LAUSD breach report confirmed the FBI and CISA as investigators.

The FBI and CISA and facts surrounding the breach confirm that the threat actors likely used compromised credentials to gain initial access to the LAUSD network to assert control over increasingly privileged passwords.

The FBI and CISA had observed the Vice Society ransomware group, which took credit for the attack, using TTPs including ["escalating privileges, then gaining access to domain administrator accounts."](#) The ransomware group used scripts to change network account passwords to prevent the victim organization from remediating the breach.

Escalating privileges assumes attackers had privileges to escalate, meaning they already had access and compromised passwords at the outset of the attack.

As the [FBI and CISA advisory](#) explained, "Vice Society actors likely obtain initial network access through compromised credentials by [exploiting internet-facing applications](#)."

The LAUSD website advises account holders to access its MyData application at <https://mydata.lausd.net>, using their "Single Sign-On credentials (i.e., LAUSD email username and password). One way to make sure your Single Sign-On is working is to log on to "Inside LAUSD" on the LAUSD homepage [www.lausd.net](http://www.lausd.net)."

The homepage, email, and SSO are exploitable internet-facing applications. Hackers accessing email via compromised passwords could use SSO to access data throughout the MyData application and any application that allows access via the SSO.

After the breach, LAUSD required employees and students to [reset their passwords in person](#) on the district website at a school district location for the @LAUSD.net email suffix before they could log on to its systems. It's something they would do in case of compromised email passwords to prevent further compromise.

### **The rise of ransomware attacks on education this year**

Ransomware groups often target education, with effects including unauthorized access and theft of staff and student PII. The uptake of teachers, staff, and students working and learning online has expanded the threat landscape, with ransomware attacks on education trending upward since 2019.

The [FBI confirmed](#) compromised education passwords for sale, including a dark web ad for 2,000 US university usernames and passwords on the .edu domain suffix, in 2020. In 2021, the FBI identified 36,000 email and password combinations for accounts on .edu domains on a publicly available instant messaging platform.

This year, the FBI found multiple Russian cybercriminal forums selling or revealing network credentials and VPN access to "a multitude of identified US-based universities and colleges, some including screenshots as proof of access."

### Beefing up security for 2023

Attackers buy and sell breached passwords on the dark web [by the millions](#), knowing that, due to password reuse, the average credential grants access to many accounts. Criminal hackers count on it so they can stuff breached passwords into login pages to gain unauthorized access. That illicit access to accounts allows hackers to gain access to sensitive data, exploit an open network, and even [inject ransomware](#).

[Specops Password Policy](#) with Breached Password Protection compares passwords in your Active Directory with over 2 billion breached passwords. Specops just added over 13 million newly breached passwords to the list in its latest update. Specops Breached Password Protection compares Active Directory passwords with a continuously updated list of compromised credentials.

For each Active Directory password change or reset, Breached Password Protection blocks the use of any compromised password with dynamic feedback on why it was blocked. If you're looking to secure your educational organization, or any business for that matter, [you can test Specops Breached Password Protection for free](#).

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HEADLINE	10/24 Europol warns of metaverse cyber-threats
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/european-police-warn-of-metaverse/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/european-police-warn-of-metaverse/</a>
GIST	<p>The coming wave of immersive internet experiences dubbed “the metaverse” could be a magnet for ransomware, identity theft, money laundering and much more, Europol has warned.</p> <p>A <a href="#">new report</a> from the Europol Innovation Lab, <i>Policing in the metaverse: what law enforcement needs to know</i>, urges police forces to start thinking now about the challenges and opportunities created by the metaverse.</p> <p>It cited figures from Gartner predicting that by 2026, a quarter (25%) of people will spend at least one hour per day in the metaverse. However, money and people will also attract cyber-criminals.</p> <p>The report specifically warned of an elevated threat from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ransomware targeting devices such as VR headsets</li><li>• Identity theft/fraud made possible by stealing users’ biometric details and creating more realistic deepfakes</li><li>• Money laundering via a range of decentralized, specialized cryptocurrencies, as well as non-fungible tokens (NFTs)</li><li>• Harassment and child abuse and exploitation, including grooming, the sharing of sexual abuse content, and potentially the use of haptics and tactile technology to physically interact with victims</li><li>• Terrorist propaganda, recruitment and training</li><li>• Targeted mis- and disinformation</li></ul> <p>However, despite the potential for cyber-criminals and others to misuse the metaverse, police are also hopeful it will offer them new ways to fight crime more effectively.</p> <p>This includes the potential for improved collaboration between remote police teams, more realistic ‘virtual’ training programs, and the use of virtual crime scenes to enhance judge and jury understanding of key events during a trial.</p> <p>The report even suggested that the metaverse could be used to rehabilitate criminals by helping to create awareness of and empathy for victims’ experiences.</p> <p>Whatever form the metaverse will eventually take, police must start interacting with it now, and the companies creating it, in order to make it a safer place from the beginning, it concluded.</p> <p>“We recommend law enforcement to monitor the development of the metaverse and to start building experience with online policing and early iterations of the metaverse,” the report said. “Doing this</p>

	officially will help organizations stay informed on the subject and enable them to assess developments accurately, answering threats as they emerge.”
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HEADLINE	10/23 Typosquatting campaign mimics 27 brands				
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/typosquat-campaign-mimics-27-brands-to-push-windows-android-malware/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/typosquat-campaign-mimics-27-brands-to-push-windows-android-malware/</a>				
GIST	<p>A massive, malicious campaign is underway using over 200 typosquatting domains that impersonate twenty-seven brands to trick visitors into downloading various Windows and Android malware.</p> <p>Typosquatting is an old method of tricking people into visiting a fake website by registering a domain name similar to that used by genuine brands.</p> <p>The domains used in this campaign are very close to the authentic ones, featuring a single letter position swap or an additional "s," making them easy for people to miss.</p> <p>In terms of appearance, in most cases seen by BleepingComputer, the malicious websites are clones of the originals or at least convincing enough, so there's not much to give away the fraud.</p> <p>Victims typically end up on these sites by mistyping the website name they want to visit in the browser's URL bar, which is not uncommon when typing on mobile.</p> <p>However, users could also be led on these sites via phishing emails or SMS, direct messages, malicious social media and forum posts, and other ways.</p> <p><b>A vast network of fake sites</b></p> <p>Some of the malicious sites were discovered by cyber-intelligence firm Cyble, which published a report this week focusing on domains mimicking popular Android app stores like Google Play, APKCombo, and APKPure, as well as download portals for PayPal, VidMate, Snapchat, and TikTok.</p> <p>Some of the domains used for this purpose are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• payce-google[.]com – impersonates Google Wallet</li><li>• snanpckat-apk[.]com – impersonates Snapchat</li><li>• vidmates-app[.]com – impersonates VidMate</li><li>• paltpal-apk[.]com – impersonates PayPal</li><li>• m-apkpures[.]com – impersonates APKPure</li><li>• tlktok-apk[.]link – impersonates download portal for TikTok app</li></ul> <p>In all these cases, the malware delivered to users attempting to download the APKs is <a href="#">ERMAC</a>, a banking trojan targeting banking accounts and cryptocurrency wallets from 467 apps.</p> <p><b>Part of a much larger campaign</b></p> <p>While <a href="#">Cyble's report</a> focused on the campaign's Android malware, BleepingComputer found a much larger typosquatting campaign from the same operators, distributing Windows malware.</p> <p>This campaign consists of over 90 websites created to impersonate over twenty-seven popular brands to distribute Windows malware, steal cryptocurrency recovery keys, and, as described above, push Android malware.</p> <table><tr><th>Category</th><th>Impersonated Brands</th></tr><tr><td>Mobile Apps &amp; Services</td><td>TikTok Vidmate SnapChat Paypal APK Pure</td></tr></table>	Category	Impersonated Brands	Mobile Apps & Services	TikTok Vidmate SnapChat Paypal APK Pure
Category	Impersonated Brands				
Mobile Apps & Services	TikTok Vidmate SnapChat Paypal APK Pure				



	APKCombo Google Wallet
<b>Software</b>	Microsoft Visual Studio Brave Browser ThunderBird Notepad+ Tor Browser
<b>Cryptocurrency</b>	TronLink MetaMask Phantom Cosmos Wallet Mintable Ethermine GenoPets
<b>Crypto and Stock trading</b>	Trading View IQ Option NinjaTrader Tiger.Trade
<b>Web sites</b>	Figma Quatro Casinos Big Time CS:Money

A notable example of one of these typosquat sites is for the very popular Notepad++ text editor. This fake site uses the domain "notepads-plus-plus[.]org", which is only a character away from the authentic at "notepad-plus-plus.org".

The files from this site install the Vidar Stealer information-stealing malware, which has had its size inflated to 700MB to evade analysis.

Another site discovered by BleepingComputer impersonates the Tor Project using the "tocproject.com" domain. In this case, the website drops the Agent Tesla keylogger and RAT.

By digging deeper into the long list of the domains, we've found several targeting popular software like:

- thundersbird[.]org – Impersonates the popular Thunderbird open-source email suite, dropping Vidar Stealer
- codevisualstudio[.]org – Impersonates Microsoft's Visual Studio Code to drop Vidar
- braves-browsers[.]org – Impersonates the Brave web browser to drop Vidar

#### **More fake sites dropping Windows malware**

The variety in the malware families delivered to victims may indicate that the campaign operators experiment with various strains to see what works best.

Another portion of these sites target cryptocurrency wallets and seed phrases, a very profitable activity for threat actors.

For example, BleepingComputer found "ethersmine[.]com", which attempts to steal the visitor's Ethereum wallet seed phrase.

Other sites in the campaign target cryptocurrency holders and digital asset investors impersonating popular crypto wallets, trading apps, and NFT sites.



	<p>Of course, the threat actors use multiple variants of each domain to cover as many mistypes as possible, so these domains are only a small sample of the entire network of domains used in the campaign.</p> <p>Some browsers like Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge include typosquatting protection. However, in our tests, the browsers did not block any of the domains we tested.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 GitHub repositories offer fake PoC exploits</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/thousands-of-github-repositories-deliver-fake-poc-exploits-with-malware/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/thousands-of-github-repositories-deliver-fake-poc-exploits-with-malware/</a>
GIST	<p>Researchers at the Leiden Institute of Advanced Computer Science found thousands of repositories on GitHub that offer fake proof-of-concept (PoC) exploits for various vulnerabilities, some of them including malware.</p> <p>GitHub is one of the largest code hosting platforms, and researchers use it to publish PoC exploits to help the security community verify fixes for vulnerabilities or determine the impact and scope of a flaw.</p> <p>According to the <a href="#">technical paper</a> from the researchers at Leiden Institute of Advanced Computer Science, the possibility of getting infected with malware instead of obtaining a PoC could be as high as 10.3%, excluding proven fakes and prankware.</p> <p><b>Data collection and analysis</b></p> <p>The researchers analyzed a little over 47,300 repositories advertising an exploit for a vulnerability disclosed between 2017 and 2021 using the following three mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IP address analysis:</b> comparing the PoC's publisher IP to public blocklists and VT and AbuseIPDB.</li> <li>• <b>Binary analysis:</b> run VirusTotal checks on the provided executables and their hashes.</li> <li>• <b>Hexadecimal and Base64 analysis:</b> decode obfuscated files before performing binary and IP checks.</li> </ul> <p>Of the 150,734 unique IPs extracted, 2,864 matched blocklist entries, 1,522 were detected as malicious in antivirus scans on Virus Total, and 1,069 of them were present in the AbuseIPDB database.</p> <p>The binary analysis examined a set of 6,160 executables and revealed a total of 2,164 malicious samples hosted in 1,398 repositories.</p> <p>In total, 4,893 repositories out of the 47,313 tested were deemed malicious, with most of them concerning vulnerabilities from 2020.</p> <p>The report contains a small set of repositories with fake PoCs that delivered malware. However, the researchers shared with BleepingComputer at least 60 other examples that are still live and in the process of being taken down by GitHub.</p> <p><b>Malware in the PoC</b></p> <p>By looking closer into some of those cases, the researchers found a plethora of different malware and harmful scripts, ranging from remote access trojans to Cobalt Strike.</p> <p>One interesting case is that of a PoC for CVE-2019-0708, commonly known as "BlueKeep", which contains a base64-obfuscated Python script that fetches a VBScript from Pastebin.</p> <p>The script is the Houdini RAT, an old JavaScript-based trojan that supports remote command execution via the Windows CMD.</p> <p>In another case, the researchers spotted a fake PoC that was an info-stealer collecting system information, IP address, and user agent.</p>

	This was created before as a security experiment by <a href="#">another researcher</a> , so finding it with the automated tool was a confirmation for the researchers that their approach worked.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Singapore online marketplace data stolen</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/data-of-alleged-26m-carousell-accounts-being-sold-on-dark-web-hacking-forums?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/data-of-alleged-26m-carousell-accounts-being-sold-on-dark-web-hacking-forums?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>SINGAPORE - A database of user accounts believed to have been stolen from online marketplace Carousell is being sold on the Dark Web and hacking forums, checks by The Sunday Times found.</p> <p>The database, allegedly containing the information of 2.6 million accounts, is being sold for \$1,000. Carousell said on Friday that <a href="#">1.95 million user accounts were affected</a>.</p> <p>It informed affected users on Friday evening that their data was compromised after a bug was introduced during a system migration and used by a third party to gain unauthorised access. The bug has been fixed, said its spokesman.</p> <p>It assured users that no credit card and payment-related information was compromised.</p> <p>Hackers uploaded the 2GB database on Oct 12, two days before Carousell confirmed the breach.</p> <p>The leak contains victims' usernames, first and last names, e-mail addresses, mobile phone numbers, country of origin, date of account creation and number of followers.</p> <p>The hackers said they will be selling only five copies of the database, which was obtained via a vulnerability that granted them partial access control of Carousell's systems.</p> <p>A sample file of 1,000 users' data was also uploaded.</p> <p>As at Saturday, the hackers said two copies have been sold.</p> <p>ST understands that this database is the one being investigated by Carousell.</p> <p>The Personal Data Protection Commission said it is aware of the incident and has "commenced investigations". The Cyber Security Agency of Singapore said it has reached out to Carousell to offer assistance.</p> <p>The Carousell spokesman said it contacted all affected users and advised them to look out for any phishing e-mails or SMSes, and not to respond to any communication that asks for information such as their passwords.</p> <p>ST has contacted Carousell for more information.</p> <p>This comes after Singtel's Australian subsidiary Optus was hit in September by a cyber breach that compromised up to 10 million customers' data in one of the country's biggest data breaches.</p> <p>Singtel's other Australian business, consulting unit Dialog, also fell victim to a data leak, with fewer than 20 clients and 1,000 current and former employees affected, it said in October.</p> <p>In 2021, the personal data of some 129,000 Singtel customers was extracted by hackers during a breach of a third-party file-sharing system. The bank account details of 28 former Singtel employees and the credit card details of 45 employees of a corporate customer were also stolen.</p>

	Some of the stolen information was put up on the Dark Web. Over 11GB of data, including payment details and e-mail exchanges, was also leaked online by hackers.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/24 SideWinder APT targets Pakistan entities</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/sidewinder-apt-using-new-warhawk.html?&amp;web_view=true">https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/sidewinder-apt-using-new-warhawk.html?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>SideWinder, a prolific nation-state actor mainly known for targeting Pakistan military entities, compromised the official website of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) to deliver a tailored malware called WarHawk.</p> <p>"The newly discovered WarHawk backdoor contains various malicious modules that deliver Cobalt Strike, incorporating new TTPs such as <a href="#">KernelCallbackTable injection</a> and Pakistan Standard Time zone check in order to ensure a victorious campaign," Zscaler ThreatLabz <a href="#">said</a>.</p> <p>The threat group, also called APT-C-17, Rattlesnake, and Razor Tiger, is <a href="#">suspected</a> to be an Indian state-sponsored group, although a report from Kaspersky earlier this May acknowledged previous indicators that led to the attribution have since disappeared, making it challenging it to link the threat cluster to a specific nation.</p> <p>More than 1,000 attacks are said to have been <a href="#">launched by the group</a> since April 2020, an indication of SideWinder's newfound aggression since it commenced operations a decade ago in 2012.</p> <p>The intrusions have been significant not only with regard to their frequency but also in their persistence, even as the group takes advantage of a massive arsenal of obfuscated and newly-developed components.</p> <p>In June 2022, the threat actor was found <a href="#">leveraging an AntiBot script</a> that's designed to filter their victims to check the client browser environment, specifically the IP address, to ensure the targets are located in Pakistan.</p> <p>The September campaign spotted by Zscaler entails the use of a weaponized ISO file hosted on NEPRA's website to activate a killchain that leads to the deployment of the WarHawk malware, with the artifact also acting as a decoy to hide the malicious activity by <a href="#">displaying</a> a <a href="#">legitimate advisory</a> issued by the Cabinet Division of Pakistan on July 27, 2022.</p> <p>WarHawk, for its part, masquerades as legitimate apps such as ASUS Update Setup and Realtek HD Audio Manager to lure unsuspecting victims into execution, resulting the exfiltration of system metadata to a hard-coded remote server, while also receiving additional payloads from the URL.</p> <p>This includes a command execution module that's responsible for the execution of system commands on the infected machine received from the command-and-control server, a file manager module that recursively enumerates files present in different drives, and an upload module that transmits files of interest to the server.</p> <p>Also deployed as a second-stage payload using the aforementioned command execution module is a Cobalt Strike Loader, which validates the host's time zone to confirm it matches the Pakistan Standard Time (PKT), failing which the process is terminated.</p> <p>Following the anti-anThe loader injects shellcode into a notepad.exe process using a technique called KernelCallbackTable process injection, with the malware author lifting source code from a <a href="#">technical write-up</a> published in April 2022 by a researcher who goes by the online alias Capt. Meelo.</p> <p>The shellcode then decrypts and loads <a href="#">Beacon</a>, the default malware payload used by Cobalt Strike to establish a connection to its command-and-control server.</p>

	<p>Per the cybersecurity company, the attack campaign's connections to the SideWinder APT stem from the reuse of network infrastructure that has been identified as used by the group in prior espionage-focused activities against Pakistan.</p> <p>"The SideWinder APT Group is continuously evolving their tactics and adding new malware to their arsenal in order to carry out successful espionage attack campaigns against their targets," the researchers concluded.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Exploiting TikTok to sell American dream</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/oct/22/tiktok-coyotes-scammers-migrants-american-dream-revealed">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2022/oct/22/tiktok-coyotes-scammers-migrants-american-dream-revealed</a>
GIST	<p>The TikTok video starts like most other travel snaps on the platform do, with selfie shots showing the user* and his companions sitting on a plane and walking through the airport.</p> <p>But unlike the highly curated images of hotels and tourist attractions typical of this genre on TikTok, the video quickly takes an uncharacteristic turn, showing the user sleeping in camps, at one point traveling by horseback and ultimately scaling what he calls “la famosa frontera de la muerte” or “the famous border of death” between the US and Mexico.</p> <p>“We are ready to climb the wall and run like deer,” he narrates in Spanish over dark images that appear to show him and his companions climbing the border wall. “Run, buddy run, or immigration will catch you,” he later says.</p> <p>The video, which appears to document one young man’s journey from Ecuador to America, has been saved 10,000 times, has more than 170,000 likes and nearly 2,500 comments – the vast majority of which are from people asking him for more information. “How much did you spend and when did you do it?,” one asks.</p> <p>“Viajes a USA” or “Travel to the US.” That’s all you have to search to find a not-so-hidden corner of TikTok largely populated by videos and posts about migration, specifically from Latin America to the US.</p> <p>Some of the posts, like the one from the user from Ecuador, appear to be from people documenting their own migrant journeys. But many purport to offer services and advice for people seeking to immigrate from countries including Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador and Honduras.</p> <p>It’s hard to tell which of these posts are shared by real “coyotes” or human smugglers, and which are scams. In either case, there are risks of deep harm, and experts worry that these videos are spreading on the platform largely unchecked.</p> <p>TikTok says it “strictly prohibits this content”, though the company did not specify whether that includes posts detailing people’s migration in addition to videos offering to help people cross the US-Mexico border.</p> <p>“TikTok would immediately remove it from our platform and ban the account,” said TikTok spokesperson AB Obi-Okoye. “We use a combination of people and technology to protect our community and partner with intelligence firms in this area to further bolster our defenses.”</p> <p>But typing in “viajes” into the TikTok search bar alone will surface suggestions like “viajes seguros a USA” or “viajes a USA garantizado,” which mean “travel safely to the US” or “travel to the US guaranteed.”</p> <p>The posts offering services are usually simple. They often include hazy footage of a journey or a US cityscape, typically overlaid with a message that seeks to assure users the service is not a scam. Some</p>

posts go as far as to show videos and pictures of people who have supposedly successfully crossed with the help of those behind the account.

Usually, the videos don't include many details and instead direct users to reach out to the account over private message or WhatsApp.

Many of the accounts don't explicitly advertise their services as illegal, but strongly imply they help people without visas or documents across the border. Others are less subtle: one account posted a video with a picture of the American and Ecuadorian flag, the text over it reading "viajes seguros y sin estafas" or "travel safely and no scam." Playing in the background is the song "El Illegal" by Ecuadorian singer, Bayron Caicedo.

Quantifying the proliferation of these type of posts on TikTok is difficult because the platform does not provide external tools that allow researchers to audit or analyze its data, unlike companies like Twitter and Meta.

The Guardian shared eight examples of posts advertising services to ferry people across the border and Obi-Okoye said the company took them down. Still, dozens of similar videos pop up when searching for these terms, including some that were posted in the last week.

The videos the Guardian reviewed show that TikTok has started to play a more critical role in the spread of posts targeting migrants than what researchers initially observed.

Studies on [human smugglers' use of social media](#) by the Tech Transparency Project (TTP), the research arm of watchdog group the Campaign for Accountability, concluded that TikTok initially was primarily utilized as a video creation platform, while Facebook was the platform of choice for these organizations to recruit clients. Facebook groups and posts from people representing themselves as coyotes would include videos created on and then downloaded from TikTok, but the video app was less frequently used by migrants to engage directly with the services.

"Human smugglers that appeared to be connected to cartels were reposting TikTok videos to Facebook groups for migrants essentially laying out their journey to prove that they were in fact taking people across this route," said Katie Paul, the director of TTP. "It's free advertisement for their services, essentially."

Facebook's popularity among coyotes was due in large part to its ubiquity in many parts of Latin America, where the company provides free access to various Meta apps as part of its controversial Free Basics program.

But TikTok, which has more than 1 billion monthly active users globally, has exploded in Latin America in the last four years. Recent [estimates](#) from market research firm eMarketer indicate the platform surpassed 100 million users in Latin America, making it the third largest social network in the region after Instagram and Facebook.

New posts about Latin American migration are uploaded everyday, and unlike on Facebook, where they are usually found in groups rather than pushed into people's feeds, the TikTok posts are found out in the open on the platform.

One of the top-liked posts on the topic has more than 70,000 likes, over 5,000 comments and has been saved nearly 5,000 times. The average video on the subject has at least 100 likes and a dozen comments.

Organic engagement on these posts is high and indicates the platform is no longer simply serving as a video creation platform for these accounts. Based on a survey of more than 50 TikToks, the Guardian found that most commenters asked for more information.

In most cases, the creator notified the commenter that they had responded in their direct messages or asked them to message them privately on WhatsApp or TikTok. In at least five cases that the Guardian observed,

the creator responded with some information, including travel routes. In one case the account holder detailed the entire route and the price: “From Guatemala to Tapachula by bus. From there by plane to the Juarez border, walk 15 minutes to the TX pass and then to Dallas. \$13,500 dollars.”

Only a dozen or so commenters publicly questioned the authenticity of the posts. When they did, accounts either ignored the comment or at times defended themselves. In response to a video that said the creators help people travel securely to the US without walking in the desert, one commenter said: “That’s what they all say and when you come there, things are no longer the way they say to you.” The creator responded, “With us, it’s different. We do not carry large quantities of people and we do not pass them from hand to hand as others do.”

TikTok is a fairly natural fit for posts targeting migrants, whether they’re misinformation, scams or authentic offers to ferry people across the border, said Abbie Richards, a TikTok disinformation and extremism researcher. Making, sharing and finding videos on TikTok is easy by design.

“It’s quite simple,” she said. “TikTok is a really good tool for marketing in an organic content sense where you can create content that will find the targeted demographic itself. The algorithm does the work for you in a lot of ways.”

TikTok’s terms of services bans content that promotes criminal activity like human exploitation, which includes “human smuggling.” In testimony to the US Senate committee on homeland security, TikTok’s chief operating officer, Vanessa Pappas, said the company relies on a combination of automation and human moderators to review posts for content violations.

The human reviewers focus “on making decisions that are more nuanced relative to our guidelines”, Pappas said. She also indicated that the company works with fact-checking partners that support 33 languages. The company does not break out how many human reviewers it has for each language and declined to disclose how many Spanish-speaking moderators it has. TikTok also has several regional safety advisory councils who advise on content policies, including one in Latin America, said Obi-Okoye.

But a [new report](#) from Time magazine indicates that to keep pace with its growth in Latin America, TikTok has contracted with hundreds of content moderators through a third-party firm in Colombia. Some of those moderators who spoke to Time said they were overworked and underpaid: they said they worked six days a week, were paid as little as \$254 a month and yet were expected to meet lofty performance goals. They also said they were exposed to emotionally traumatic content and were offered little mental health support as they were tasked with taking down disturbing posts that ranged from murder to cannibalism.

Regulating posts related to migration on a platform like TikTok is a “tricky balance”, according to Petra Molnar, associate director at York University’s Refugee Law Lab.

Sweeping content moderation policies can quickly turn into censorship of information that is geared toward and, in some cases is essential for, marginalized people, Molnar said. “International law has recognized that people who are fleeing from a desperate situation might need to use human smuggling, cartels or avail themselves of alternate methods of escape.”

But, just by looking at them, it’s hard to discern which TikTok accounts and posts are scams. When it comes to migration, scams can fall under a number of categories, according to Nilda Garcia, a visiting assistant professor at Texas A&M International University who studies the way criminal networks and Mexican drug cartels use social media. Some accounts will disappear entirely after receiving the agreed upon fees. Others will take migrants somewhere and leave them there without helping them cross the borders. Still others leave migrants with a criminal organization, Garcia said.

“These scammers can lure more people because they have more reach through these platforms,” she said. “It can be dangerous because the migrants don’t know if these people are working with criminal organizations or what the situation is with the criminals or organizations at the border. For example, the



[border] state of Tamaulipas is so violent now and [migrants] don't realize they have to come through these places in order to cross to the US."

In Facebook groups, researchers have noticed some people will post warnings identifying certain users as scammers, including by leaving screenshots of conversations showing the users disappeared after they were paid, Garcia said. "So there's people in these groups that are actually trying to protect people."

On TikTok, some users appear to be taking on considerable risk to share accounts of their own journeys with details about the difficulties they came across at each border. One user said she traveled with "coyotes" who took her phone so she couldn't record anything and claimed they treated all those who traveled with them badly. Commenters verified her claims and said crossing the Mexican border was the worst part of the journey for them.

It's information like this that can be helpful for people looking to migrate to have, said Molnar, the York University associate director. "This highlights how we need to have these deeper conversations about the flow of information and the way that these platforms really are at the heart of so much information-sharing and knowledge production for all of us, let alone for these kind of contextually specific groups," she said.

The experts agree that moderating these posts in a way that does not lead to censorship would require TikTok to deploy more human reviewers with both cultural and linguistic expertise. "They need specialists in each country," Garcia argues. "I don't think one strategy fits all in all situations. Each area is very different and very specific."

But tackling issues of migration on social platforms will be difficult so long as the societal discussion off-platform remains murky, they argue. Molnar said: "Our world is heating up, so many people are living in precarious situations, so they're not going to stop coming unless we have a global conversation about how we create a more just world and make sure that our migration processes are dignified and we're not really having those conversations," Molnar said.

\* The Guardian has reached out to the user, but is not identifying him, nor the users behind similar accounts described in the story, to protect their safety.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Alarm: threat to undersea cable in Hawaii</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/22/threat-to-undersea-cable-in-hawaii-highlights-dang/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/22/threat-to-undersea-cable-in-hawaii-highlights-dang/</a>
GIST	<p>HONOLULU — Federal security officials working an investigation on the Dark Web made an alarming discovery last April. A hacker obtained login credentials for a server at a telecommunications company in Hawaii with access to an undersea communications cable.</p> <p>Officials feared the hacker would get into the server and shut down one of five undersea communications cables stretching 2,500 miles from these idyllic Pacific islands to the mainland.</p> <p>The disruption could have affected telephone, internet, cable and cell phone service for not only civilian infrastructure but the island's strategic military bases led by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command.</p> <p>Within hours of being alerted to the undersea cable threat, the Honolulu office of Homeland Security Investigations, part of the Department of Homeland Security, alerted the company and took steps to make sure the network was not breached. Officials said an attack on the company had been "disrupted."</p> <p>Six months later, the incident is still under investigation. The telecom company was not identified, nor was a hacker who had the login data who was arrested in a foreign country.</p> <p>"The indications are more toward the criminal side and there was an international nexus to it," said Frank J. Pace, homeland security administrator at the Hawaii state department of defense who helped respond to the threat.</p>



“As far as I know, there was no nation-state issue,” he added.

But security officials here say the attempted cyber break-in highlights the vulnerability of undersea cables.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration states that 95% of all international data and voice transfers travel on fiber optic cables on the ocean’s floors.

“Submarine cables clearly play a critical role in global communications,” NOAA said noting their role in links with Hawaii, Alaska, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

“They also support critical commercial, economic and national security endeavors. and they carry a majority of civilian, military and government offshore communications traffic.”

The threat of disruption to undersea cables comes at a time increasing geopolitical tensions with China over Taiwan, and with Russia over its war in Ukraine.

“The vulnerability of undersea cables and their points of entry onto and off the land are critically important,” said retired Navy Capt. Jim Fanell, a former Pacific Fleet intelligence director.

“The security of these cables is a national security priority that must be protected and that requires an administration that will increase, not decrease, the funding for the U.S. Navy,” he said noting that the data in the cables the global economy and global infrastructure from energy, banking, and food supply.”

Submarine cables connect the world through a spider web of underwater links, mostly made up of fiber optic lines. They send data at fantastic speeds up to 180,000 miles a second, and sharing 400 gigabytes of data per second.

The network of wires has increasing in importance with the use of cloud computing, streaming and increased reliance by both government and private sector operations.

Cables can be disrupted by natural disaster as occurred in January on the Pacific island of Tonga. An underwater volcano erupted, severing a cable and cutting off the island’s links to the rest of the world until repairs were made a month later.

On Thursday, a fishing vessel was suspected of cutting an undersea cable and disrupting communications near the Scottish archipelago of Shetland, across from Norway and around 100 miles north of mainland Britain.

Clandestinely accessing underwater communications links or breaking in to landing points also can provide an espionage bonanza for states such as China, which in 2018 was caught diverting internet traffic for espionage and intellectual property theft.

A larger danger is that the cables will be sabotaged during crises or conflict to disrupt enemy communications, a concern heightened by recent tensions between the United States and China over Taiwan.

Mr. Pace, the Hawaii homeland security administrator, said a recent threat briefing provided to senior state leaders reveals that China is speeding up plans to take over Taiwan, by force if necessary.

Emergency planners in Hawaii are prepared to respond to the loss of undersea cables if a conflict breaks out on the Taiwan Strait, he said.

Also, Chinese and Russian intelligence-gathering ships regularly sail in waters near Hawaii. Officials say one mission for the spy ships is reconnaissance of undersea cables in preparation of future attacks.

The cables are located deep under the Pacific ocean but reach shallower water — and thus are more vulnerable to attack — as they near coasts and landing stations.

The targeting of a Hawaiian submarine cable set off alarm bells at the Indo-Pacific Command among security officials who recognized that any disruption of undersea cables could impact a range of military functions that rely on the internet for communications.

The command headquarters here operates military forces – warships, submarines, bombers and ground forces – that are deployed from Alaska to India.

The forces must be ready at all times to respond to crises or conflict, such as a Chinese attack on Taiwan, or a new outbreak of war between North Korea and South Korea.

A report made public in August by George Mason University's Mercatus Center warned that war between China and Taiwan likely will involve attacks on undersea communications cables or landing points.

People's Liberation Army forces are expected to target undersea cables, or launch cyber or military attacks on submarine cable landing stations to disrupt both civilian and military data and communications links, the report stated.

Similar strikes are expected in Hawaii, Mr. Pace said, because of the island's strategic location and its military facilities. Geopolitical tensions have heightened security officials' concerns about communications disruptions, he noted.

Maps showing Hawaii's five undersea cables, all privately owned, can be found with an internet search.

Hawaiian Telcom, which owns one of the submarine cables, said its server was not involved in the April compromise of login credentials.

"We maintain a robust security operations program that adheres to the cyber and physical security requirements of the National Institute of Standards and Technology for the protection of our systems and facilities," said Ann Nishida, a company spokeswoman.

Spokesmen for four other owners of undersea cables in Hawaii did not respond to a request for comment.

The other cables, one of which was likely the target in of potential telecommunications server hack in April, are the Southern Cross cable, SEA-US cable, Asia-America Gateway cable, the Japan-U.S. cable and the Hawaiki cable.

The Japan-U.S. cable is jointly owned by AT&T and 23 other companies mostly in Asia, including Chinese state-run China Telecom and China Unicom. The involvement of Beijing-linked companies in part ownership in that cable is a cause of concern for security officials.

Indo-Pacific Command spokesman Capt. Matthew Gregory, said undersea cabling and infrastructure is under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security.

"If directed, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command stands ready to respond to threats to U.S. government property and interests across the region," Capt. Gregory said.

Mr. Pace, the Hawaiian state homeland security official, said his office works closely with the Indo-Pacific Command to build up redundancy in communications, including through undersea cables.

"From Indo-Pacom's perspective, they have a concern of mission assurance," Mr. Pace said.

Although military communications links are generally secure, the command relies on cable communications to project power.

	<p>Severing undersea cables or electronically disrupting their information flows, whether civilian or military, could impact missions, he said.</p> <p>Ownership of the cable network of more than 800,000 miles of the bundled glass threads is shifting.</p> <p>The cables in the past were dominated by telecommunications companies and governments.</p> <p>Today, however, four major technology giants, Microsoft, Alphabet, (parent company of Google, Meta (formerly Facebook) and Amazon are now the dominant users of undersea cable capacity, the Wall Street Journal reported in January.</p> <p>By 2024, the four companies will own more than 30 long-distance submarine cables linking every continent on the globe.</p> <p>The objective of the companies is to increase bandwidth and improve connectivity for the coming internet-of-things expansion.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Hackers breach Iran atomic energy agency</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hackers-breach-irans-atomic-energy-agency-protests-persist-91952985">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/hackers-breach-irans-atomic-energy-agency-protests-persist-91952985</a>
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Iran's atomic energy agency alleged on Sunday that hackers acting on behalf of an unidentified foreign country broke into a subsidiary's network and had free access to its email system.</p> <p>An anonymous hacking group claimed responsibility for the attack on Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, demanding Tehran release political prisoners arrested in the recent nationwide protests. The group said it leaked 50 gigabytes of internal emails, contracts and construction plans related to Iran's Russian-backed nuclear power plant in Bushehr. It was unclear whether the breached system contained classified material.</p> <p>The hack comes as Iran continues to face nationwide unrest first sparked by the Sept. 16 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman in police custody for allegedly not adhering to the country's strict Islamic dress code. On Sunday, Iran's leading teachers' association reported that sit-ins canceled classes at multiple schools across the country in protest over the government's crackdown on student protesters.</p> <p>The protests first focused on Iran's state-mandated hijab, or headscarf, for women but transformed into one of the most serious challenges to the country's ruling clerics. Protesters have clashed with police and even called for the downfall of the Islamic Republic itself. Security forces have fired live ammunition and tear gas to disperse demonstrations, killing over 200 people, according to estimates by rights groups.</p> <p>Iran's civil nuclear arm said hackers breached the email system used by a company operating the country's sole nuclear power plant in the southern port city of Bushehr. The agency blamed a "foreign country" for the attack, without elaborating. Iran has previously accused the United States and Israel for cyberattacks that have impaired the country's infrastructure.</p> <p>"These illegal efforts are done out of desperation is for attracting public attention," the organization said.</p> <p>An anonymous hacking group, calling itself "Black Reward," published what appeared to be images of contracts, plans and equipment at the Bushehr plant, which went online over a decade ago with help from Russia.</p> <p>"Unlike Westerners, we do not flirt with criminal mullahs," the group wrote, announcing the hack on its Telegram channel.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/22 New 'TommyLeaks', 'SchoolBoys' are same
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/tommyleaks-and-schoolboys-two-sides-of-the-same-ransomware-gang/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/tommyleaks-and-schoolboys-two-sides-of-the-same-ransomware-gang/</a>
GIST	<p>Two new extortion gangs named 'TommyLeaks' and 'SchoolBoys' are targeting companies worldwide. However, there is a catch — they are both the same ransomware gang.</p> <p>Last month, security researcher MalwareHunterTeam <a href="#">tweeted</a> about a new extortion gang known as 'TommyLeaks.'</p> <p>This hacking group claims to breach corporate networks, steal data, and demand a ransom not to leak data. Ransom demands seen by BleepingComputer range from \$400,000 to \$700,000.</p> <p>In October, MalwareHunterTeam <a href="#">discovered</a> another new extortion gang named 'SchoolBoys Ransomware Gang' that claims to steal data and encrypt victims' devices as part of their attacks.</p> <p>BleepingComputer later found a sample of the SchoolBoys ransomware encryptor [<a href="#">VirusTotal</a>] and confirmed it was created using the <a href="#">leaked LockBit 3.0 builder</a>.</p> <p>The threat actors steal data during their attacks but do not have a known public data leak site at this time.</p> <p>While there was nothing linking the groups at the time, they both used the same Tor chat system for their negotiation sites.</p> <p>Even more curious, this same chat system has only been used before by the Karakurt extortion group.</p> <p><b>Two sides of the same coin</b></p> <p>This week, BleepingComputer has confirmed that both TommyLeaks and the SchoolBoys Ransomware Gang are, in fact, the same extortion group.</p> <p>In a SchoolBoys negotiation chat shared with BleepingComputer, the threat actors greet their victim as "TommyLeaks" in their attempts to coerce a ransom payment.</p> <p>While it is unclear why they are utilizing two different names as part of their operation, they may be trying a similar <a href="#">approach to that taken by Conti and Karakurt</a>.</p> <p>Earlier this year, AdvIntel CEO Vitali Kremez told BleepingComputer that Karakurt was part of the Conti cybercrime syndicate.</p> <p>When Conti's ransomware encryptor was blocked in attacks, the hackers extorted the victim using the already stolen data under the Karakurt name rather than the Conti brand.</p> <p>To take it one step further, as the TommyLeaks/SchoolBoys group uses the chat system as Karakurt, we may be seeing a rebrand of the Conti offshoot into these newer brands.</p> <p>While it is too soon to tell if this is what is occurring, the extortion group is one that enterprises need to keep an eye on as they are targeting entities of all sizes.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/21 Common passwords nearly all cyberattacks
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/a-common-password-list-accounts-for-nearly-all-cyberattacks">https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/a-common-password-list-accounts-for-nearly-all-cyberattacks</a>
GIST	Tens of millions of credential-based attacks targeting two common types of servers boiled down to a small fraction of the passwords that formed a list of leaked credentials, known as the RockYou2021 list.

Vulnerability management firm Rapid7, via its network of honeypots, recorded every attempt to compromise those servers over a 12-month period, finding that the attempted credential attacks resulted in 512,000 permutations. Almost all of those passwords (99.997%) are included in a common password list — the RockYou2021 file, which has 8.4 billion entries — suggesting that attackers, or the subset of threat actors attacking Rapid7's honeypots, are sticking to a common playbook.

The overlap in all the attacks also suggest attackers are taking the easy road, says Tod Beardsley, director of research at Rapid7.

"We know now, in a provable and demonstrable way, that nobody — 0% of attackers — is trying to be creative when it comes to unfocused, untargeted attacks across the Internet," he says. "Therefore, it's very easy to avoid this kind of opportunistic attack, and it takes very little effort to take this threat off the table entirely, with modern password managers and configuration controls."

Every year, security firms present research suggesting users are continuing to pick bad passwords. In October 2021, for example, a cybersecurity researcher in Tel Aviv, Israel, found he could recover the passwords to 70% of the wireless networks as he pedaled past, often because they [used a cellphone number as the password](#). In 2019, [an evaluation of passwords leaked to the Internet](#) found that the top password was "123456," followed by "123456789" and "qwerty," although it's unclear whether those leaks included old or rarely used accounts without password policies.

In this case, however, Rapid7 researchers focused on the common passwords used by attackers rather than defenders, so the analysis applies to attackers' guesses in brute-force attacks. Such attacks have risen dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, with password-guessing becoming the most popular method of attack in 2021, according to [an analysis by cybersecurity firm ESET](#).

"With the increasing adoption of both remote work and cloud infrastructures, the number of people accessing corporate information systems across the internet has skyrocketed," Rapid7 stated in its report. "As with so many things in security, the addition of convenience and complexity has made the task of protecting these systems far more challenging."

### **One Year, a Half-Million Passwords**

[Rapid7's research](#) used credential data gathered from its Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) and Secure Shell (SSH) honeypots between Sept. 10, 2021, and Sept. 9, 2022, detecting tens of millions of attempts to connect to the company's honeypots. The vast majority of attacks attempted to gain access to the SSH honeypots, with 97% of the more than 500,000 unique passwords targeting the mock SSH servers, according to Rapid7. The attacks targeting both SSH and RDP came from about 216,000 unique source IP addresses.

The half-million passwords represent less than a 100th of a percent of the permutations in the RockYou21 data set.

"The traffic we're seeing is indicating that these are off-the-shelf attacks with essentially no custom configuration," Beardsley says. "To put it another way, if there was any customization that ventured beyond the stock set of passwords, we would have seen it in these samples."

While the data says little about whether users are selecting poor passwords, the selection does indicate that attackers are taking the simplest path in their attacks. As is clear from the data, attackers are not attempting every entry on the RockYou2021 list, but a much smaller number. In addition, only a handful of passwords and usernames are the most common, dominating the distribution of passwords.

Top RDP usernames are "administrator," "user," and "admin," while the top SSH usernames are "root," "admin," and "nproc." Bad passwords — such as "admin," "password," "123456," and an empty string indicating no password — are the most popular passwords attempted by attackers.

### **Attackers Just Assume Users Use "Lame" Passwords**

	<p>The study didn't reflect poor password creation by users but rather that attackers believe that trying a few poorly selected passwords against their targets are a worthwhile guessing game, says Rapid7's Beardsley.</p> <p>"We can't say precisely how successful attackers are with these lists of lame passwords, but basic economics tells us that they must be getting at least some value out of these attacks, or else we wouldn't be seeing millions of attempts over the year," he says. "My suspicion is that whoever is running these bots are running these attacks essentially at very low cost, and it's worthwhile enough to run this kind of attack with only occasional wins."</p> <p>Organizations should continuously monitor systems for default and easily guessable passwords, which means running the RockYou2021 list of stolen credentials against exposed and internal systems. Rapid7 also recommends paying particular attention to external-facing SSH and RDP servers, as well as Internet of Things systems that may not have easy-to-change passwords.</p> <p>In addition, companies should teach employees to use password managers to make strong, unique password creation easy, Beardsley says.</p> <p>"By utilizing a password manager, you have the ability to generate a completely random password — one that certainly isn't in the RockYou set — and have a different one for every service you offer," he says. "It all depends on being aware of the threat, but once you cross that hurdle, it's easy to avoid becoming a victim."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/21 FBI: Iran threat group likely target midterm</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/fbi-iranian-threat-group-likely-to-target-us-midterms">https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/fbi-iranian-threat-group-likely-to-target-us-midterms</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Although the Iranian threat group Emennet Pasargad is largely dedicated to launching attacks against Israeli officials, the FBI warns the group is likely to engage in hack-and-leak operations against US interests — namely the upcoming midterm elections.</p> <p>The latest FBI advisory explained that Emennet tactics usually involve a breach, data theft, data leak, and amplification of leaked data on social media; often they leave encryption malware behind, for good measure. The group was active during the 2020 presidential elections, and the FBI is warning they are likely to reemerge as Americans vote in the November midterm elections.</p> <p>Adding to the alarm, the FBI said Emennet was linked to a cyberattack on a US organization within the past year, demonstrating the group is still an active threat.</p> <p>"The FBI assesses the purpose of these operations is to undermine public confidence in the security of the victim's network and data, as well as embarrass victim companies and targeted countries," the <a href="#">advisory</a> said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/21 Daixin Team targets health organizations</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-govt-warns-of-daixin-team-targeting-health-orgs-with-ransomware/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-govt-warns-of-daixin-team-targeting-health-orgs-with-ransomware/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>CISA, the FBI, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) warned that a cybercrime group known as Daixin Team is actively targeting the U.S. Healthcare and Public Health (HPH) sector in ransomware attacks.</p> <p>The federal agencies also shared indicators of compromise (IOCs) and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) in a joint advisory issued today to help security professionals detect and block attacks using this ransomware strain.</p> <p>"The Daixin Team is a ransomware and data extortion group that has targeted the HPH Sector with ransomware and data extortion operations since at least June 2022," the advisory revealed.</p>

Since June, Daixin Team attackers have been linked to multiple health sector ransomware incidents where they've encrypted systems used for many healthcare services, including electronic health records storage, diagnostics, imaging services, and intranet services.

They're also known for stealing patient health information (PHI) and personal identifiable information (PII) and using it for double extortion to pressure victims into paying ransoms under the threat of releasing the stolen information online.

The ransomware gang gains access to targets' networks by exploiting known vulnerabilities in the organizations' VPN servers or with the help of compromised VPN credentials belonging to accounts with multi-factor authentication (MFA) toggled off.

Once in, they use Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) and Secure Shell (SSH) to move laterally through the victim's networks.

To deploy the ransomware payloads, they escalate privileges using various methods, such as credential dumping.

This privileged access is also used to "gain access to VMware vCenter Server and reset account passwords for ESXi servers in the environment" with the same goal of encrypting the systems using ransomware.

"According to third-party reporting, the Daixin Team's ransomware is based on leaked Babuk Locker source code," [the federal agencies added](#).

"This third-party reporting as well as FBI analysis show that the ransomware targets ESXi servers and encrypts files located in /vmfs/volumes/ with the following extensions: .vmdk, .vmem, .vswp, .vmsd, .vmx, and .vmsn. A ransom note is also written to /vmfs/volumes/."

Before encrypting their victims' devices, they use Rclone or Ngrok to exfiltrate stolen data to dedicated virtual private servers (VPS).

U.S. health organizations are advised to take the following measures to defend against Daixin Team's attacks:

- Install updates for operating systems, software, and firmware as soon as they are released.
- Enable phishing-resistant MFA for as many services as possible.
- Train employees to recognize and report phishing attempts.

In August, CISA and the FBI also warned that attackers known for mainly targeting the healthcare and medical industries with Zeppelin ransomware [might encrypt files multiple times](#), making file recovery more tedious.

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HEADLINE	10/21 Emotet botnet in new malspam campaigns
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/emotet-botnet-distributing-self.html?&amp;web_view=true">https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/emotet-botnet-distributing-self.html?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>The notorious <a href="#">Emotet botnet</a> has been linked to a new wave of malspam campaigns that take advantage of password-protected archive files to drop CoinMiner and Quasar RAT on compromised systems.</p> <p>In an <a href="#">attack chain</a> detected by Trustwave SpiderLabs researchers, an invoice-themed ZIP file lure was found to contain a nested self-extracting (SFX) archive, the first archive acting as a conduit to launch the second.</p> <p>While phishing attacks like these traditionally require persuading the target into opening the attachment, the cybersecurity company said the campaign sidesteps this hurdle by making use of a batch file to automatically supply the password to unlock the payload.</p>



The first SFX archive file further makes use of either a PDF or Excel icon to make it appear legitimate, when, in reality, it contains three components: the password-protected second SFX RAR file, the aforementioned batch script which launches the archive, and a decoy PDF or image.

"The execution of the batch file leads to the installation of the malware lurking within the password-protected RARsfx [self-extracting RAR archive]," researchers Bernard Bautista and Diana Lopera said in a Thursday write-up.

The batch script achieves this by specifying the archive's password and the destination folder to which the payload will be extracted, in addition to launching a command to display the lure document in an attempt to conceal the malicious activity.

Lastly, the infection culminates in the execution of CoinMiner, a cryptocurrency miner that can also double up as a credential stealer, or [Quasar RAT](#), an open source .NET-based [remote access trojan](#), depending on the payload packed in the archive.

The one-click attack technique is also notable in that it effectively jumps past the password barrier, enabling malicious actors to carry out a wide range of actions such as cryptojacking, data exfiltration, and ransomware.

Trustwave said it has identified an increase in threats packaged in password-protected ZIP files, with about 96% of these being distributed by the Emotet botnet.

"The self-extracting archive has been around for a long time and eases file distribution among end users," the researchers said. "However, it poses a security risk since the file contents are not easily verifiable, and it can run commands and executables silently."

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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 New phishing targets Saudi Absher portal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/phishing-campaign-saudi-government/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/phishing-campaign-saudi-government/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Multiple phishing domains impersonating Absher, the Saudi government service portal, have been set up to provide fake services to citizens and steal their credentials.</p> <p>The discovery comes from cybersecurity researchers at CloudSEK, who published an <a href="#">advisory</a> about the threat on Thursday.</p> <p>"The threat actors are targeting individuals by sending an SMS, along with a link, urging people to update their information on the Absher Portal," wrote the security experts. "The phishing website presents users with a fake login portal, compromising the login credentials."</p> <p>According to CloudSEK, after the fake 'login' action, a pop-up appears on the site prompting a four-digit one-time password (OTP) sent to the registered mobile number, probably used to bypass multifactor authentication (MFA) on the legitimate Absher Portal.</p> <p>"Any four-digit number is accepted as an OTP without verification, and the victim successfully logs in to the fake portal," <a href="#">CloudSEK</a> clarified.</p> <p>Once the fake login process is complete, the user is then asked to fill in a 'registration' form, divulging sensitive personally identifiable information (PII), and redirected to a new page where they are prompted to choose a bank. They are then directed to a fake bank login portal designed to steal their credentials.</p> <p>"After submitting the internet banking login details, a loading icon pops up, and the page gets stuck, while the user banking credentials have already been compromised," the security researchers wrote.</p>

	<p>According to CloudSEK, government services in the Saudi region have recently been a prime target for cyber-criminals to compromise user credentials and use them to conduct further cyber-attacks.</p> <p>"Multiple phishing domains have been registered to gain the PII of individuals in Saudi Arabia," the company wrote.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of these attacks, CloudSEK called on government organizations to monitor phishing campaigns targeting citizens and inform and educate them about these dangers, for instance, by telling them not to click on suspicious links.</p> <p>The advisory comes weeks after CloudSEK discovered a separate phishing campaign <a href="#">targeting KFC and McDonald's customers</a> in Saudi Arabia.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/21 Wholesale giant METRO hit by IT outage
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/wholesale-giant-metro-hit-by-it-outage-after-cyberattack/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/wholesale-giant-metro-hit-by-it-outage-after-cyberattack/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>International wholesale giant METRO is experiencing infrastructure outages and store payment issues following a recent cyberattack.</p> <p>The company's IT team is currently investigating the incident with the help of external experts to discover the cause of this ongoing outage.</p> <p>IT outages have been affecting stores in Austria, Germany, and France since at least October 17, according to a report from <a href="#">Günter Born</a>.</p> <p>"METRO/MAKRO is currently experiencing a partial IT infrastructure outage of several technical services," the wholesaler revealed in a note on its website. "METRO's IT team has immediately started a thorough investigation together with external experts to identify the cause of the interruption of services."</p> <p>Even though its stores are still operating, METRO says that it was forced to set up offline payment systems and that online orders are delayed.</p> <p>"While METRO stores are operating, and services are regularly available disruptions and delays may occur," the company <a href="#">said</a>. "Online orders through the web app and online store are being processed but delays need to be expected, as well."</p> <p>The company has notified the authorities regarding this security incident and will cooperate with any investigations linked to the attack.</p> <p>METRO is an international wholesale company for customers in the HoReCa (hotel, restaurants, and catering) industry, operating in over 30 countries and employing more than 95,000 people worldwide.</p> <p>It operates 661 wholesale stores (as of September 30, 2022) under the METRO and MAKRO brands.</p> <p>At the moment, the company shared no information on the nature of this cyberattack, but IT infrastructure outages are usually linked to ransomware attacks.</p> <p>"We will continue intensive analysis and monitoring and provide updates as required. METRO sincerely apologizes for any inconvenience the incident is causing for any of its customers and business partners," the wholesaler added today.</p> <p>When contacted by BleepingComputer earlier today, a METRO spokesperson said the company couldn't share additional info on the incident due to the ongoing investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/21 Sneaky kind of cybercrime growing
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/21/this-sneaky-kind-cybercrime-rules-them-all/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/10/21/this-sneaky-kind-cybercrime-rules-them-all/</a>
GIST	<p>As ransomware steals the headlines, another kind of cybercrime is quietly making off with far, far more money — and there are signs it's on the rise, too.</p> <p>In “business email compromise,” or BEC, criminals pose as someone a victim trusts, such as their company's CEO, sometimes by hacking them and taking over their email. The criminals send an urgent message to transfer money, which they then pilfer.</p> <p><b>BEC regularly tops the FBI's <a href="#">annual list of costliest internet crimes</a>, which it collects from complaint data. In 2021, BEC accounted for approximately a third of the year's \$6.9 billion in cyber losses — around \$2.4 billion.</b> Ransomware lagged behind with just \$50 million. <a href="#">An FBI alert from May</a> said the amount of BEC losses and attempted theft increased as a result of the <a href="#">coronavirus</a> pandemic, which forced companies to conduct more routine business virtually.</p> <p>During the second quarter of this year, cybersecurity company Arctic Wolf said the rate of BEC cases it responded to doubled, <a href="#">from 17 percent to 34 percent</a>.</p> <p>Adding to the risks of BEC, it's also a kind of cybercrime that thrives on volume.</p> <p>“We end up with a situation that is really death by 1,000 papercuts,” <b>Pete Renals</b>, principal threat researcher for Palo Alto Networks' Unit 42, told me. (The company this year alone has <a href="#">aided in multiple Interpol and Nigerian Police Force operations</a> to arrest BEC suspects.)</p> <p><b>Why it works</b></p> <p>There are a number of reasons BEC has proven so effective for so long.</p> <p><b>Most of what the BEC criminals do is “really easy,”</b> and the techniques have been honed over time such that “they're really just rinsing and repeating at this stage of BEC evolution,” <b>Ryan Kalember</b>, executive vice president of cybersecurity strategy at Proofpoint, told me.</p> <p>It's not hard to deploy malware that steals access to accounts and sends an email to a victim from that compromised account, he said. The part that's harder is setting up the bank accounts to move money around, he said, but gangs have figured out how to manage that, too.</p> <p><b>The criminals also don't have to target big companies to be effective,</b> Kalember said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The truth is, they really don't need the big fish most of the time. We have seen them, in fact, be very, very active in much smaller organizations that simply happen to be in sectors where lots of money is moved around solely based on digital communications and between parties that don't necessarily know each other all that well,” Kalember said.</li> </ul> <p><b>It's also a kind of crime that takes advantage of people's trustworthy sensibilities,</b> <b>Daniel Thanos</b>, vice president of Arctic Wolf Labs, told me. “Human nature sometimes is too trusting,” he said. “People also respond to urgency.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That doesn't mean they're entirely to blame; the criminals are crafty about making the emails look authentic, sometimes using information they gleaned from social media to tailor their messages, Thanos said.</li> </ul> <p><b>Unlike other cyber-related crimes, the victims don't always know they've been hit until much later,</b> Renals said. A ransomware attack encrypts an organization's systems, grinding everything to a halt immediately. Law enforcement can help get ransom payments back, but by the time someone realizes they've been scammed by a BEC criminal, the money's usually long gone.</p> <p><b>Under the radar</b></p> <p><b>BEC doesn't get as much attention in part because of the ways it's not like ransomware.</b></p>

It's not destructive, like a ransomware attack can be if it shuts down a hospitals' systems. Because it doesn't hit key systems, it's not treated as any kind of national security threat, Renals said. Because of the "death by 1,000 papercuts" effect, **the smaller heists that add up over time are also less likely to make news**, he said.

Many of the thefts might not even get reported. **That's because being the victim of a BEC scam is potentially more embarrassing than suffering a ransomware attack**, Renals said.

"With ransomware, they got into a vulnerability in your network. It happens," he said. "With business email compromise ... that is a very embarrassing story to say, 'Hey, I got an email from the CEO that told me to transfer money and I did it.' Nobody wants to own up to that because there's more of a human aspect there."

**BEC also isn't interesting in a technical way** that might get a ton of attention from security researchers who would make headlines presenting about it at a high-profile cyber conference, Kalember said.

**Some of the ways to defend against BEC are similar to the way anyone would defend against most cyberattacks**, like using multi-factor authentication to protect email accounts.

**Some sound more mundane, but can make a big difference.** "Have an actual process that is validated and tested for how you authorize funds to leave your company," Renals said. "No funds should ever leave you just based off an email, right? There should be someone you call, there should be a piece of paper that has to be signed and physically handed."

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## Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/23 Gitmo 9/11 trial awaits plea deal response
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/us/politics/sept-11-gitmo-terrorism.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/us/politics/sept-11-gitmo-terrorism.html</a>
GIST	<p>GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — A military judge has canceled pretrial hearings in the Sept. 11 case at Guantánamo Bay while prosecutors await a response from the Biden administration on a proposed plea deal that would avert a death-penalty trial for the five defendants.</p> <p>The judge, Col. Matthew N. McCall, postponed the next hearings until at least Jan. 16 while "policymakers" decide whether to agree to conditions from the defendants concerning their post-conviction confinement.</p> <p>His order, dated Oct. 13, quoted prosecutors as saying they did not expect a response until perhaps next year. Colonel McCall ordered the prosecutors to update him on the issue every two weeks starting on Dec. 16.</p> <p>The judge did not describe the issues that are being discussed. But people with knowledge of the negotiations have said the defense is seeking a pledge from the government that <a href="#">Khalid Shaikh Mohammed</a>, who is accused of masterminding the attacks, and the others will not be held in solitary confinement. The men, who were secretly held for three and four years in C.I.A. "black site" prisons, have also asked the government to establish a civilian torture treatment program for them.</p> <p>The hearings had already been on hold since March, when prosecutors invited defense lawyers to negotiate a plea settlement for the defendants, <a href="#">who are accused of helping to plot the 2001 hijackings that killed nearly 3,000 people</a> in New York, in Pennsylvania and at the Pentagon.</p> <p>The trial <a href="#">has been delayed</a> by higher court and logistical challenges, as well as defense lawyers' efforts to declassify information about the C.I.A.'s torture of the defendants.</p>

Prosecutors, defense lawyers and White House spokesmen declined to discuss which members of the Biden administration's national security team were reviewing the issues. Prosecutors have said in court filings that they submitted a document describing the issues in March to [Caroline Krass](#), the Pentagon general counsel who formerly served as the top lawyer for the C.I.A.

Also unanswered is whether the decision to offer some of the assurances would be made at the interagency or the cabinet level, or solely by President Biden. Nor would administration officials respond to questions about whether the issues had been presented to Mr. Biden or his national security adviser, Jake Sullivan.

The defendants were arraigned 10 years ago, but have no trial date. An [earlier effort by a senior Pentagon official to reach a plea agreement](#) without the prosecution's involvement was scuttled during the Trump administration.

But this time the prosecutors initiated talks so that they would have a more central role in any plea agreement and sentencing hearing, according to people with knowledge of the negotiations who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the sensitive negotiations.

Prosecutors in the Sept. 11 case were alarmed by the dynamics at the sentencing hearing last year of another former C.I.A. prisoner, [Majid Khan](#), a suburban Baltimore high school graduate turned courier for Al Qaeda.

Mr. Khan expressed remorse for joining the movement and also [described his torture](#) in C.I.A. custody. A jury of U.S. military officers ordered him to serve 26 years but wrote a [letter urging clemency](#).

If the Sept. 11 prosecutors reach an agreement, they plan a more robust counternarrative to the tales of waterboarding and other abuse and cruel treatment by the C.I.A.

The office of the chief war crimes prosecutor, [Rear Adm. Aaron C. Rugh](#), recently wrote to relatives of victims of the Sept. 11 attacks inquiring whether they would want to testify at sentencing, a sign that, behind the scenes, prosecutors are preparing for the possibility of guilty pleas that would avert a lengthy trial.

"The prosecution currently intends to ask the military judge to allow testimony from at least one family member of each of the 2,976 people who were killed on Sept. 11, 2001, as well as any individual who suffered his or her own injuries should they wish to testify," the letter said.

Some victims' relatives have expressed dismay that the case could end in a plea without the possibility of a death sentence. Others have welcomed the possibility of a resolution that would hold the men responsible for the crime.

Once the prisoners are sentenced, the military judge is released from the case and the Guantánamo court has no authority over whether sentencing agreements are honored. But the Biden administration's position on the issues could become part of the plea, to give the prisoners something similar to a contract to take to a federal court if future prison staff members or governments breach the plea agreement.

Detainees at Guantánamo Bay are currently held in communal detention, and allowed to pray in groups and sometimes eat together and speak to one another in outdoor recreation yards — unlike during their years of isolation in the C.I.A. prisons and early in their stay at Guantánamo Bay. They want to be sure that will not change if they plead guilty.

Some of the defendants also say they require specialized treatment for brain injuries, sleep disorders and other traumas, which have been described in court hearings and filings.

The prisoners receive care from [Army and Navy medical staff members](#) who have mostly treated trauma-related issues with medication.

	<p>Scott Roehm of the <a href="#">Center for Victims of Torture</a>, a service provider, said care “requires an integrative approach to both physical and mental health, delivered by specially trained, independent treatment providers who survivors trust.”</p> <p>Mr. Roehm declined to say whether the organization, which is based in St. Paul, Minn., and trains people how to work with torture victims, had been consulted on the proposed program at Guantánamo Bay. He said it was important to give survivors “an environment in which they can begin to feel safe.”</p> <p>The judge in the Sept. 11 case had initially scheduled 18 weeks of pretrial hearings in 2022. He has canceled all of them, in part because a new capital defender was awaiting a security clearance, but he has held closed hearings with individual defense teams on topics that other parties to the case are not allowed to hear.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/24 Senior Lion's Den member killed by blast</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://allisrael.com/senior-lion-s-den-terrorist-killed-in-a-bomb-explosion-in-nablus">https://allisrael.com/senior-lion-s-den-terrorist-killed-in-a-bomb-explosion-in-nablus</a>
GIST	<p>A well-known member of the Palestinian terrorist group Lion's Den was killed on Sunday in Nablus when his motorcycle exploded, with earlier footage allegedly showing an individual placing a bomb on the parked vehicle.</p> <p>As a senior member of Lion's Den, Tamer al-Kilani reportedly played a central role in the recent terror wave against Israelis. The terror group immediately claimed that Israel had “assassinated” the senior member, describing al-Kilani as one of its “fiercest fighters.”</p> <p>“The treacherous occupation placed a sticky TNT device [on the motorcycle] as the way to assassinate al-Kilani,” Lion's Den wrote on Sunday morning on social media. On Instagram and in an official statement, the group called on “every resident who can enter Nablus to participate in his funeral today.”</p> <p>Senior Fatah official Tayseer Nasrallah told Voice of Palestine radio that the Palestinian Authority would “end the siege” of Nablus, where the recently established <a href="#">Lion's Den</a> is based.</p> <p>“Breaking the siege imposed on the city is done by going to the checkpoints and opening them with a popular Palestinian will,” Nasrallah said to the station.</p> <p>Lion's Den also threatened to escalate the recent wave of violence, which has gone after Israeli targets.</p> <p>“We promise the occupation and [Israel Defense Forces Chief of the General Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv] Kochavi a severe, agonizing and painful response,” the group's official statement said. “Today we gave our land the best of our soldiers. The lions will go one after the other, either to victory or to become a martyr.”</p> <p>The IDF and the Israeli Security Agency did not comment directly on al-Kilani's death; however, an army spokeswoman said the Israeli military “will continue to operate at all times and in all places from which terror attacks against Israelis emanate.”</p> <p>Israel has recently stepped up its military presence in Nablus because of the increase in terrorist activity in the area. While the Abbas regime is formally in charge of Nablus, it is either unwilling or incapable of preventing the terrorist wave targeting Israel.</p> <p>Two Israeli soldiers and 19 Arabs have been killed in the West Bank during the last month. The overwhelming majority of the Arabs killed were armed terrorists who clashed with Israeli security forces.</p> <p><b>WHO WAS AL-KILANI?</b></p> <p>Tamer al-Kilani, 33, a senior Lion's Den member, was previously imprisoned for violent activities against Israel. In November, Kilani planned a major terrorist attack for the Tel Aviv area; however, Israeli authorities succeeded to stop the terrorist plot, <a href="#">arresting</a> an armed terrorist who had been dispatched from Nablus to Jaffa.</p>



When he was nabbed, the terrorist was carrying an AK-47 automatic rifle and two explosive devices that could have killed many Israelis.

### **FATAH CONDEMNS AL-KILANI'S KILLING**

The P.A.'s ruling Fatah organization, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, condemned al-Kilani's killing and described it, in an official statement, as a "cowardly assassination."

While the P.A. is formally in charge of maintaining law and order in most Arab-populated regions in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), its power is limited and waning. Nevertheless, Fatah and the P.A. have also incited hatred and violence against Israel and Jewish people. During an official visit to Germany in August, Abbas was condemned for his outrageous anti-Semitic libel that the Jewish state has committed **"50 Holocausts"** against Arabs.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 ISIS resurfacing in northern, western Iraq</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://wfin.com/fox-world-news/isis-resurfacing-in-iraq-as-country-looks-to-hit-back-at-terror-organization/">https://wfin.com/fox-world-news/isis-resurfacing-in-iraq-as-country-looks-to-hit-back-at-terror-organization/</a>
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD, Iraq -The Islamic State caliphate, which held large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq, was defeated in 2018, yet analysts are seeing signs, including a growing number of attacks in northern and western Iraq, of a resurgence, a cause for concern that needs to be watched closely.</p> <p>"The Islamic State has begun to regain its activity in an attempt to gather what remains of its members," Fadil Abu Ragheef, an Iraq-based expert on terrorist groups, told Fox News Digital.</p> <p>He said that while the organization had lost the main centers of power it held under the first generation of its leadership, it continues to pose a danger in the areas where it still has strength, the northern cities between Salah al-Din, Kirkuk and the Mam Mountains.</p> <p>Ragheef also referred to areas in western Anbar that constitute a fortification for the organization and still pose a widespread danger. In recent months authorities have dismantled an ISIS arms factory for booby-trapping armored and fortified vehicles, presumably for suicide attacks in Kirkuk and elsewhere.</p> <p>Recent attacks include suicide bombings close to Baghdad and other parts of the country, and Iraqi authorities have also uncovered and stopped some ISIS operations.</p> <p>During an interview with Fox News Digital on the sidelines of the <a href="#">United Nations General Assembly</a> in September, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein urged western countries to keep going after ISIS.</p> <p>He warned of the threat of the resurgence not just to Syria and Iraq but the world. "What is going to happen?" Hussein asked. "That means they would be once again active inside Syria and that also they would cross the border, and they will come because Syria is not so far away from Iraqi border. So they will cross the border, and they will come to Iraq." He called on countries to repatriate their citizens from the Al-Hol prison camp as Iraq had been doing.</p> <p>Ragheef noted that while ISIS is nowhere near its previous strength, it has resumed its activities and is not going away. It is an ideological organization that continues to practice its activities with full force, he added, and is in the midst of reorganizing its ranks again.</p> <p>He said many ISIS members are among the approximately 57,000 people held in the Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria, and noted that the situation has become a growing concern for the U.S. and international community.</p> <p>During a visit last month to the camp, Central Command chief Gen. Erik Kurilla warned that ISIS seeks to exploit the horrific conditions of the camp, where 70% of the population is under the age of 12. The general called the camp "a literal breeding ground for the next generation of ISIS."</p>



Kurilla also noted that half of the camp's residents are from Iraq and commended Iraq for repatriating its nationals.

Bill Roggio a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and editor of the Long Journal War, which follows the global war on terrorism, told Fox News Digital, "The Islamic State, which is born out of al Qaeda in Iraq, is in a stage of resurgence. It has ebbed and flowed over the last two decades."

"It has demonstrated an ability to regenerate after suffering major defeats," Roggio continued, "and one of its traditional bases of support has been in northern and western Iraq, particularly the Hamrin mountains. The Islamic State has been in a rebuilding phase, having lost its caliphate in 2019, and is regaining some ground in western and north Iraq."

Leaders of local public mobilization forces (PMF) formed to stop ISIS in 2014 say they are watching out for the terror group.

"Our eyes will stay focused on the terrorism and our fingers will be on our weapons to defend our country," Sayyid Hamid al-Yasiri, the leader of one group told Fox News Digital. Al-Yasri was appointed by the influential Shia cleric Grand [Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani](#). Sistani, the supreme religious leader to Iraq's Shiite community, holds massive sway in the country.

According to an Associated Press report, in 2014, Sistani called on able-bodied Iraqis to volunteer and join security forces to fight the onslaught of the Islamic State. The call was widely heeded, and the mobilization helped defeat the militants. But it also swelled the ranks of Shiite militias, many of which are loyal to Iran and have been accused of worsening sectarian tensions.

Al-Yasri and his group have made clear that they don't take orders from Iran. Indeed, earlier this year a pro-Iranian militia group tried to assassinate Al-Yasri following a speech he made that was critical of militias taking orders from outside interests.

"We have submitted several reports [to Iraqi authorities] that ISIS has started to be very active and there is an influx of foreign fighters from Syrian territory, and they are distributed from the island of Nineveh toward the mountainous regions," Al-Yasri said.

He added that his militia has been in contact with ISIS, killing some 14 terrorists in a recent battle, and said this "proved that this organization has begun to return with force to these areas, and appropriate plans must be drawn up to confront it, and rely on the reports of the people of the field in evaluating ISIS' new movements."

He noted that last month his group carried out seven operations, interspersed with multiple clashes and the seizure of four modern pickup vehicles, modern weapons, booby-traps, and huge food and drug stores. He concluded: "As a field man... I see that ISIS has returned with strength and a new tactic based on a war of attrition and hit-and-run."

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Tensions between Pakistan, Afghanistan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.eurasiareview.com/23102022-al-zawahiris-killing-raises-tensions-between-pakistan-and-afghanistan-analysis/">https://www.eurasiareview.com/23102022-al-zawahiris-killing-raises-tensions-between-pakistan-and-afghanistan-analysis/</a>
GIST	<p>On July 30, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who replaced Osama bin Laden in 2011, was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Afghanistan. U.S. President Joseph R. Biden announced his death on August 1 saying that, "Now justice has been delivered, and this terrorist leader is no more." Originally an Egyptian surgeon, al-Zawahiri had a \$25 million bounty on his head (<a href="#">Dawn</a>, August 2).</p> <p>The most significant question that arose in the wake of his death concerned the origin of the drone that killed him. It certainly was not from inside Afghanistan. But was it from neighboring Pakistan or some other country? And would Pakistan allow the U.S to use its airspace for a strike on al-Zawahiri in Kabul?</p>

If the drone was launched from Pakistan, then the drone strike would not be without geopolitical consequences and political fallout for Pakistan, which refused to host U.S. bases in the country following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan last year ([Geo TV](#), June 8, 2021). Before the withdrawal from Afghanistan, in contrast, U.S. forces had been using Shamsi airbase in Baluchistan province, which borders Afghanistan, to attack targets inside Afghanistan since the initial U.S. invasion in 2001.

### **Pakistan's Role in the al-Zawahiri Operation: Speculation or Reality?**

Pakistani authorities reject any role played by Pakistan in the U.S. operation to assassinate the al-Qaeda leader. According to an anonymous government source, "The killing of [al-Zawahiri] is an internal matter of Afghanistan. No role of any sort was played by Pakistan.... They [the U.S.] have many options in the region. However, it [the drone] did not fly from Pakistan or through its air space ([Express Tribune](#), August 2)." Afghanistan's Taliban government, however, has accused Pakistan of allowing the U.S. to utilize Pakistani airspace, which Pakistan's foreign office has rejected ([Dawn](#), August 29).

What has triggered increasing speculation about Pakistan's role in the operation is the telephone conversation between Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa and the U.S. Central Command General Michael Erik Kurilla. The phone call occurred only 48 hours before the launch of the drone that killed al-Zawahiri. According to the Pakistani military media wing, both sides exchanged views on mutual interests, including regional stability, defense and security cooperation ([Express Tribune](#), July 29). The timing, therefore, indicated the mission to target al-Zawahiri's was also discussed.

Moreover, the absence of operational details shared with the media by the U.S. or Pakistan implies that the Pakistani base and air space were used by the U.S. to target al-Zawahiri in Kabul. Security analysts on South Asian affairs contend that the drone that killed al-Zawahiri must have traversed Pakistan's airspace, although it may have taken off from a Gulf Arab country. Such analysts contend that Pakistan played a role in the operation and, therefore, shared intelligence with the U.S. about Zawahiri's location ([South China Morning Post](#), August 2).

### **Al-Zawahiri's Killing Raises Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan**

The U.S. drone not only killed the al-Qaeda chief but also dealt a blow to Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, which have deteriorated since the Taliban took over Kabul last year. The assassination has set off a blame game and raised tensions between the two neighboring nations. The Taliban claim that U.S. drones, which enter from Pakistan, continue to be seen in the skies over Kabul even after al-Zawahiri's killing.

While the Taliban has warned Islamabad about using Pakistani territory to attack Afghanistan, Pakistan has rejected the Taliban's allegations ([Arab News](#), August, 28). Pakistan's Foreign Office Spokesperson, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, expressed "deep concern" over allegations leveled by Kabul and stated, "In the absence of any evidence, as acknowledged by the Afghan minister himself, such conjectural allegations are highly regrettable and defy the norms of responsible diplomatic conduct." Islamabad further urged the Taliban to fulfil their international commitment of not allowing the use of its territory for terrorism against any country ([Dawn](#), August 29).

Following the Taliban's allegations against Islamabad, the TTP also restarted attacks in Pakistan. A September attack that killed five people, including police personnel, in Swat area in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province broke the indefinite ceasefire between the TTP and Islamabad, which had been mediated by the Taliban in Kabul ([Dawn](#), September 13). Further, TTP militants killed three Pakistani soldiers in an exchange of fire across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram district ([Dawn](#), September 13).

### **Pakistan's Cooperation and Political Fallout**

Under its post-Afghanistan strategy, the U.S. wanted Pakistan to play the role of a frontline ally in the war on terrorism, with Islamabad extending logistical support and providing air bases to the U.S. in Pakistan. As U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken outlined, "We're staying in the game... We're pulling our forces out of Afghanistan, we are not withdrawing. We are not leaving. We are remaining deeply engaged when it comes to supporting Afghanistan ([Dawn](#), May 7, 2021)." Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran

Khan, however, during an interview last year rejected the idea of allowing the CIA to use Pakistani territory to conduct cross-border counter-terrorism operations against al-Qaeda, Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP), or the Taliban ([Dawn](#), June 19, 2021).

Khan has also called the present coalition government of Shehbaz Sharif an “import” imposed as a result of a “foreign conspiracy” by the U.S against him. Khan alleged that “regime change” in Islamabad was hatched by the U.S. to topple his government over his independent foreign policy ([Dawn](#), March 30). He has been publicly proclaiming that his government was toppled because he categorically refused to allow the CIA to launch drone attacks against targets in Afghanistan or use Pakistan’s airspace and territory, such as in the al-Zawahiri operation ([Express Tribune](#), April 5).

A month after the ouster of Khan’s government following a no-confidence vote, the U.S. sought to resume its counter-terrorism operations in collaboration with Pakistan under the new government led by Shehbaz Sharif, who replaced Khan in April. U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price stated, “We want to continue to work together in areas where we do have mutual interests with our Pakistani partners.... That includes counter-terrorism” ([Dawn](#), May 6). Although the Biden administration did not publicly demand the continued use of bases in Pakistan because that demand has been very unpopular among the Pakistani people, Khan’s government had not allowed the U.S. to use Pakistan’s territory for launching attacks on targets inside Afghanistan. If the present Sharif administration had a facilitating role (or is suspected of such) in conducting the operation that killed al-Zawahiri, then it will pay a heavy price for this in the national elections scheduled for 2023. Such suspicions will also put a rubber stamp on Imran Khan’s foreign conspiracy narrative.

### Conclusion

The speculations about Pakistan’s role in U.S. counterterrorism operations inside Afghanistan will not come to an end until Islamabad clarifies its policy regarding cooperation with the U.S. and Washington shares more operational details with the media about the operation conducted to kill al-Zawahiri. If this operation was conducted with the secret cooperation of the Pakistani government led by Shehbaz Sharif, it would contrarily not have been possible under the previous Imran Khan government, which was fiercely opposed to participating in the U.S. war against terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

The main Pakistani opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which is led by Khan, has also raised the suspected use of Pakistan’s airspace to kill al-Zawahiri as a political issue, which will continue to persist in Pakistani political discourses. As another PTI leader stated, “The nation wants to know whether we are again going to become a tool of the United States against al-Qaeda ([Dawn](#), August 6).” The answer to that question could determine whether Imran Khan regains power in Pakistan and, if that occurs, whether the U.S. can count on continued counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Al-Shabab militants storm Kismayo hotel</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.voanews.com/a/al-shabab-militants-storm-hotel-in-kismayo-/6801673.html">https://www.voanews.com/a/al-shabab-militants-storm-hotel-in-kismayo-/6801673.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Al-Shabab militants in Somalia have attacked a hotel in the southern port town of Kismayo, Sunday, witnesses said.</p> <p>The attack started with an explosion outside the hotel that was followed by the storming of the Tawakal Hotel by armed men. The first explosion was heard around 12:15 local time.</p> <p>Witnesses and videos from the scene reported sustained gunfire near the hotel, between the attackers and security forces.</p> <p>Ambulances were also seen moving towards Kismayo Port Road, where the hotel is located.</p> <p>The hotel is frequented by the local elders and business community leaders. Casualties are not yet known.</p> <p>The al-Shabab militant group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.</p>

HEADLINE	10/23 New Zealand eyes threat posed by 'incels'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.odt.co.nz/news/national/nz-intelligence-agency-monitoring-threat-posed-incels">https://www.odt.co.nz/news/national/nz-intelligence-agency-monitoring-threat-posed-incels</a>
GIST	<p>New Zealand's intelligence agency has investigated the threat involuntary celibate men, or "incels" pose in Aotearoa, including the likelihood of them committing violent extremism.</p> <p>The group are known as incels and are largely heterosexual men fixated on their lack of sexual and romantic success with women.</p> <p>The misogynistic belief system rose to prominence in recent years following several vicious attacks that left dozens dead in North America.</p> <p>New information, released to the Herald on Sunday under the Official Information Act from the NZ Security Intelligence Service, reveals a report was completed on the ideology and the threat level those who subscribe to it pose to New Zealand.</p> <p>Security manager Rebecca Kitteridge confirmed to the Herald on Sunday individuals have been investigated by NZSIS, but said that did not necessarily mean the investigations were commenced because of the incel ideology.</p> <p>"Many of the individuals investigated by our counter-terrorism teams display support for various violent extremist ideologies and often have overlapping ideological motivations."</p> <p>While Kitteridge said she was unable to provide the number of people identified as incels in New Zealand for national security reasons, a 2021 threat assessment document noted it was "comparatively small".</p> <p>The report - Involuntary Celibates in the New Zealand Context Threat Insight - from the Combined Threat Assessment Group (CTAG), a multi-disciplinary agency led by NZSIS, said there was a "realistic possibility" the absence of a distinct Kiwi incel community was driving them to white identity extremism (WIE) ideology.</p> <p>"This progression from incel to WIE has the potential to motivate individuals to mobilise to violence because of WIE's overtly violent nature."</p> <p>One of the most notorious incel attacks overseas came in 2018 when 25-year-old Alek Minassian intentionally drove a rental van into pedestrians on a busy pavement in Toronto. Ten people were killed.</p> <p>Minutes before the attack he shared a Facebook post claiming the "Incel Rebellion" had already begun and they would overthrow the "Chads and Stacys" - a term used by the group to describe young, attractive people who don't struggle to find a sexual partner.</p> <p>He also praised 22-year-old mass murderer Elliot Rodger, who killed six people and wounded more than a dozen others in shooting and stabbing attacks near the University of California, Santa Barbara before killing himself in 2014.</p> <p>Rodger's murderous rampage, though it was not the first misogyny-based attack, soon became a rallying point for other incels.</p> <p>The NZSIS document said should a New Zealand-based incel mobilise to violence, the individual would almost certainly adhere to at least one other extremist ideology.</p> <p>It reported that although the majority of incels were not violent, because the online subculture regularly converges with white extremist ideology equivalents, it was likely the incel ideology could be a "gateway" extremism to violence.</p>

"CTAG assesses the convergence of incel and WE [white extremism] subcultures could result in individuals pursuing male supremacist ideologies deliberately, or inadvertently, being indoctrinated into violent extremist ideologies."

The group wrote that incel individuals attempting to identify a root cause or "mastermind" behind their problems routinely reproduce anti-Semitic, racist and anti-immigration rhetoric.

In their assessment, there was likely a "small number" of incel adherents in New Zealand, but they do not appear to have formed a coherent community, online or in the real world.

However, the document also said the ideology would likely remain a motivating factor for violent extremist individuals in New Zealand.

"But is unlikely to be the sole motivation for a terrorist attack."

Kitteridge said in the case of incel ideology, the NZSIS would only have an investigative interest in an individual with incel views if they also demonstrated intent and capability to carry out violent extremism in support of extremist views.

"An individual with incel viewpoints, but no intent or capability to carry out violence in support of these views, would not meet the NZSIS' threshold for investigation."

Victoria University of Wellington PhD candidate Angus Lindsay said incels feel marginalised for failing to live up to dominant ideas of masculinity and because they are socially and sexually alienated.

"The findings of my own and other recent research suggest that incel-related violence does not only constitute the extraordinary 'lone-wolf' violence that is often associated with the group."

More often, he said, incels lash out at women and other incels through online cyber-bullying or by harming themselves.

"This type of extremist behaviour is not only confined to online spaces but is exacerbated by digital technologies. Incels are but one component of a much broader male supremacist movement."

A shared state of "inceldom" is the "central unifying narrative" that unites individual incels and forms an important aspect of the collective Incel identity.

"Incels have a preoccupation with sexual rejection, pseudoscientific explanations of 'sexual marketplaces' and the so-called 'crisis of masculinity'. This crisis narrative constructs the position of (white) men as in decline and situates themselves as a marginalised group in contemporary society. Despite holding a degree of privilege within society as typically white men and boys, incels perceive themselves as an oppressed and marginalised minority in comparison to the mainstream."

This perception that incels are an oppressed group serves as the bedrock of their shared "black pill" philosophy, said Lindsay.

"The black pill is a broad conspiracy theory that if metaphorically swallowed, awakens the consumer to the understanding that the world is stacked against so-called 'low-status' men (incels) in favour of women and alpha males due to unchangeable genetic wiring."

Through data unearthed in his own and international studies, Lindsay said it is broadly understood that the black pill philosophy simplistically categorises people into a three-tiered system, primarily based on physical attractiveness.

At the top of this hierarchy is the minority of alpha males and "desirable" women, a majority of "average-looking betas" or "normies" follow, and then a minority of physically "unpleasant" (exclusively male) incels are found at the bottom.

"Narratives that constitute the black pill often centre around a past 'golden age' – a nostalgic time of a patriarchal society where monogamy is the rule, traditional gender roles are accepted and followed, marriage is between a man and a woman, and adultery is prohibited."

While the "golden age" myths have some intersections with far-right worldviews, Lindsay said incels broadly blame feminism, multi-culturalism, and the film and media environment for representing unrealistic depictions of masculinity.

Essentially, he described men who were extremely frustrated with the prevailing system which is believed to be responsible for men's supposed economic, social and sexual alienation.

"They direct their grievances towards women who they paradoxically see as the source of, and solution to, all of their problems. When their advances are ignored or rejected, they have been known to lash out."

In most cases, this takes place within online echo chambers that are mostly frequented by other incels, but sometimes he told the Herald on Sunday this takes place in other online spaces.

"Extremely rarely, this has also taken place through offline violence – as the several instances of incel-related 'lone-wolf' violence since 2014 demonstrate."

Lindsay said people need to keep in mind that despite the shocking, unforgivable and uncommon instances of mass violence, these events also exist in an environment of permissive and normalised male aggression and violence against women.

Although incels are an extreme manifestation of misogyny, Lindsay said their harmful attitudes are not confined to the spaces that they frequent, rather they are symbolic of structural misogyny and patriarchal systems of socialisation.

"The ideology of incels is interwoven with the wider socio-political environment which discourages men to talk about their feelings and valorises instances of male aggression.

"The broader technical and social environment that allows these kinds of views to exist relatively unimpeded is concerning to me."

To his knowledge, Lindsay said, there has been very little research into incel groups or individuals in New Zealand.

"In my master's thesis I observed a few users of incel forums describe themselves as Kiwis, however, this was mostly in the post-Christchurch terror attack space. Incels claiming that they were Kiwis were discussing the terrorist's actions and providing context for their fellow incel forum users on the event."

The Herald on Sunday also requested the number of threats from people in the incel community or with incel beliefs that had been identified by NZSIS in the last five years, however, it declined the request, again as to do so would be "prejudicial to national security".

The 2020 Strategic Threats report, also released by NZSIS to the Herald on Sunday, noted while significant incel-related violence had not occurred in New Zealand, they considered it to be a potential threat.

"Due to the shared nature of incel grievances, their presence on multiple internet and social media sites, and wider hostile rhetoric concerning feminist causes, especially online," the document said.

	<p>Lindsay said assessing the composition of incel groups is difficult due to their use of pseudonyms in the public forums that they congregate on and the lack of data surveying the make-up of incel forum users.</p> <p>The only data available, he said, was from unscientific community polls from late 2019 and early 2020 that attracted 550 and 665 respondents respectively, however, it's impossible to say how accurately the polls reflect the incel community.</p> <p>Despite the incels commonly being presumed to be largely white, or white-presenting – in the polls in question, roughly 45 per cent are equally divided among a range of ethnic groups, Lindsay told the Herald on Sunday.</p> <p>"The average incel appears to be in his mid-20s, of average height, white and European or North American. He has never had a relationship or kissed a woman."</p> <p>He said the incel was deeply unhappy, probably depressed and has considered (but never had) surgery for aesthetic purposes.</p> <p>"He believes that physical appearance is the most important element for his lack of romantic success, followed by his lack of social skills," said Lindsay.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/22 New record for terrorism suspects at border</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/22/joe-biden-sets-new-record-terrorism-suspects-borde/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/22/joe-biden-sets-new-record-terrorism-suspects-borde/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The Border Patrol apprehended 20 terrorism suspects in September, bringing the total for fiscal year 2022 to nearly 100, according to new data released late Friday that shows the Biden administration obliterating previous records.</p> <p>Experts say the numbers are a leading indicator of the chaos at the southern border, because when more are caught, it means even more are likely getting through.</p> <p>The 20 suspects nabbed in September is a new monthly record, easily topping the previous high of 15 set in May.</p> <p>By contrast, just 15 were caught in all of 2021, and just 11 were caught in the four years from 2017 to 2020.</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>It issued the new numbers just before midnight, burying the latest bad border news in an overnight news release.</p> <p>CBP reported nearly 2.4 million encounters with unauthorized migrants at the southern border in fiscal year 2021, which ended last month. Of those, 2.2 million were caught by Border Patrol agents as they tried to sneak in, and the rest were encountered at ports of entry demanding to be let in without authorization.</p> <p>That trounces previous records.</p> <p>Like the terrorist suspect numbers, agents say that when more are caught, more are getting through.</p> <p>CBP didn't report how many of the 2.4 million were released into the country, but based on partial data the agency submitted in a court case earlier this year, it is hundreds of thousands and could top 1 million.</p> <p>In September alone, CBP encountered 227,547 illegal immigrants at the southern border. That was the third-highest month on record, topped only by April and May of this year.</p>



	<p>CBP did claim some success, saying it has seen a drop in Venezuelans attempting to enter over the last week after it adopted a Trump-era expulsion policy.</p> <p>“While this early data is not reflected in the latest report, it confirms what we’ve said all along: when there is a lawful and orderly way to enter the country, individuals will be less likely to put their lives in the hands of smugglers and try to cross the border unlawfully,” said CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus.</p> <p>The Washington Times calculated that the migrant smuggling economy over the last year now tops \$20 billion, with much of that going directly to the cartels that control the routes over the border.</p>
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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	10/22 Doctors worry: world running out of helium
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/helium-shortage-doctors-are-worried-running-element-threaten-mris-rcna52978">https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/helium-shortage-doctors-are-worried-running-element-threaten-mris-rcna52978</a>
GIST	<p>A <a href="#">global helium shortage</a> has doctors worried about one of the natural gas’s most essential, and perhaps unexpected, uses: MRIs.</p> <p>Strange as it sounds, the lighter-than-air element that gives balloons their buoyancy also powers the vital medical diagnostic machines. An MRI can’t function without some 2,000 liters of ultra-cold liquid helium keeping its magnets cool enough to work. But helium — a nonrenewable element found deep within the Earth’s crust — is running low, leaving hospitals wondering how to plan for a future with a much scarcer supply.</p> <p>“Helium has become a big concern,” said Mahadevappa Mahesh, professor of radiology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Baltimore. “Especially now with the geopolitical situation.”</p> <p>Helium has been a volatile commodity for years. This is especially true in the U.S., where a Texas-based federal helium reserve is dwindling as the government tries transferring ownership to private markets.</p> <p>Until this year, the U.S. was counting on Russia to ease the tight supply. An enormous new facility in eastern Russia was supposed to supply nearly one-third of the world’s helium, but a fire last January derailed the timeline. Although the facility could resume operations any day, the <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a> has, for the most part, stopped trade between the two countries.</p> <p>Now, four of five major U.S. helium suppliers are rationing the element, said Phil Kornbluth, president of Kornbluth Helium Consulting. These suppliers are prioritizing the health care industry by reducing helium allotments to less essential customers.</p> <p>“Helium is on allocation for sure,” said Donna Craft, a regional construction manager for Premier Health who contracts with helium suppliers for some 4,000 hospitals. “We’re probably not <a href="#">blowing up balloons</a> in the gift shop anymore.”</p> <p>Hospitals haven’t canceled patients’ MRIs or shut down machines yet. They have seen helium costs rise at an alarming rate, though — possibly up to 30%, Kornbluth guessed. But without an end in sight for the helium shortage, the future of MRI remains uncertain.</p> <p><b>‘An essential commodity’</b></p> <p>MRI, short for magnetic resonance imaging, has been a staple of health care since the 1980s. The massive machines provide <a href="#">high-resolution images</a> that allow doctors to see details in organs, bones and tissue that may not show up on X-rays.</p>

“You get these sharp images, and you can distinguish soft tissues,” said Dr. Scott Reeder, chief of MRI at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. “It’s central to many things we do in modern medicine.” MRIs help doctors diagnose [brain tumors](#), strokes, spinal cord injuries, liver diseases and cancer. The 3D images, experts say, are irreplaceable.

Instead of relying on X-rays, which emit trace amounts of radiation to peer inside the body, MRIs use magnetic fields and radio waves. When someone lies stock-still inside the tube-shaped magnetic field, their body’s atoms align with strong magnetic currents. Pulses of radio waves then tell the machine’s sensors which tissues are where, and the machine renders its image.

Keeping an MRI’s magnetic current superconductive requires extreme cold. That’s where helium comes in: With a boiling point of minus 452 degrees Fahrenheit, liquid helium is the coldest element on Earth. Pumped inside an MRI magnet, helium lets the current travel resistance-free.

“Helium is how the magnet continuously exists,” Mahesh said. “It’s an essential commodity.”

At any point, an MRI machine contains about 2,000 liters of liquid helium, though suppliers need to replenish any helium that boils off. Mahesh [estimates](#) that an MRI machine uses 10,000 liters of liquid helium over its life span. (According to GE Healthcare, a manufacturer of the machines, that [life span is 12.8 years](#).) In 2015, there were roughly 12,000 machines in the U.S., making MRIs one of the biggest helium consumers in the world, far above balloon stores.

In contrast, spectators have an estimated 400,000 cubic feet of helium to thank for suspending all of the tractor-trailer-size balloons in Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade. [Converted to liquid form](#), that helium would only keep about two MRIs operational for their life span.

### **No quick fix**

The problem is that no other element is cold enough for the MRI. “There’s no alternative,” Craft, of Premier Health, said. “Without helium, MRIs would have to shut down.”

Manufacturers like GE Healthcare and Siemens Healthineers recognize this vulnerability. “We are concerned about shortages in the helium market,” said Ioannis Panagiotelis, chief marketing officer of MRI at GE. “Every industry and hospital with an MR system has been affected.”

GE and Siemens are both developing MRIs requiring less liquid helium. Siemens recently introduced one requiring just 0.7 liters, and, according to Panagiotelis, GE rolled out a machine that’s “1.4 times more efficient than previous models.” These technologies aren’t widely available, though, and replacing the country’s 12,000 MRI machines — each weighing up to 50,000 pounds — is anything but a quick fix. Meanwhile, hospitals keep installing additional conventional MRI machines to meet demand for diagnostic scans.

“The concern is the shortage becomes so acute we can’t set up new scanners,” Reeder said. The University of Wisconsin, he said, has plans to open a new cancer center with two MRIs. “When we install those systems, what’s going to happen if there’s no helium?”

Mahesh said Johns Hopkins is also adding another MRI to its fleet, and it’ll be the same “workhorse scanner” as its 22 other machines.

As doctors dread possible worst-case scenarios, scientists who use liquid helium for research are already there. When suppliers began rationing this summer, Harvard University physicists Amir Yacoby and Philip Kim shut down around half of their labs’ projects. On the opposite side of the country, the University of California, Davis [reported](#) that one of its helium suppliers cut allocations by half, including for medical use.

	<p>“The shortage is motivating us to figure out ways of doing the same experiments without the liquid helium,” Yacoby said. The forced innovation may preview what’s to come for MRIs, and it may be necessary, shortage or no shortage.</p> <p>“There’s only a finite amount of helium in the Earth’s crust,” Kim said. “Once it evaporates off, it’s completely lost into outer space.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Face-slapping league gets Vegas go-ahead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/24/nevada-new-face-slapping-league-ufc-dana-white">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/24/nevada-new-face-slapping-league-ufc-dana-white</a>
GIST	<p>Cue the <a href="#">Will Smith jokes</a>: the much-maligned president of the UFC, Dana White, has the green light for a new venture – the Power Slap League.</p> <p>Though much remains uncertain about the new league, slap fighting is pretty much what it sounds like: two people face each other and take turns smacking one another on the side of the head with an open hand.</p> <p>The Nevada state athletic commission <a href="#">voted last week</a> in Las Vegas – a city known for carefully considered decisions – to oversee the slap-fighting league.</p> <p><a href="#">Videos</a> this year from one competition, the Slap Fighting Championship, show some fairly brutal hand-to-face contact while the recipient simply stands there and takes it. Some blows lead to knockouts. Seated on the sidelines, Arnold Schwarzenegger weighs in: “Thank God it wasn’t me that got slapped.”</p> <p>Hunter Campbell, the UFC’s chief business officer, said his team had spent a year working with commission officials to develop rules for the league built on those of mixed martial arts (MMA). “It made all the sense in the world to go toward regulation before the sport’s commencing, for all the obvious reasons – No 1, the health and safety of the competitors,” he <a href="#">told ESPN</a>. Safety rules will include requirements for protective gear, such as mouthguards and earplugs, and regulations on which parts of a face can be slapped. Campbell and officials <a href="#">also called for</a> blood testing, brain scans and on-site medical staff.</p> <p>But even <a href="#">MMA</a> enthusiasts appear to have serious reservations.</p> <p>The primary concern: “It’s all offense and no defense,” writes Trent Reinsmith at the UFC news site <a href="#">Bloody Elbow</a>. “It’s common to see competitors badly concussed or fall completely unconscious from the blows.” On his Substack <a href="#">the Fighting Life</a>, the journalist Ben Fowlkes describes the sport as “what you’d get if you let 13-year-old boys invent a new sport”.</p> <p>On Twitter, Luke Thomas, a combat sports analyst for CBS, <a href="#">wrote</a>: “If boxing is to hit and not be hit, slap fighting is kinda the opposite where getting hit is specifically arranged and done without impediment. Nevada’s commission is pretty shameless.” USA Today’s Simon Samano <a href="#">posted</a>: “It might as well be kicking each other in the nuts.”</p> <p>Slap fighting has existed in various forms for years; it was <a href="#">mocked on Fox Sports</a> as far back as the early 2000s. But it <a href="#">grew in popularity</a> in the early days of the pandemic, with help from viral videos. Last year, a Polish competitor, Artur “Waluś” Walczak, was knocked out several times at an October event and <a href="#">died the following month in the hospital</a> after being put in a medically induced coma, Reinsmith notes.</p> <p>White himself has been the subject of <a href="#">numerous controversies</a>. He has told fighters concerned with UFC pay to “shut up and fight” and backed the organization’s decision to feature the ex-NFL player Greg Hardy, who was convicted of domestic abuse, though the charges were <a href="#">expunged after an appeal</a>. He is an ardent supporter of Donald Trump and spoke at the 2016 Republican national convention.</p> <p>Campbell said the Power Slap League hopes to have a “major broadcast partner” by year’s end. It has not yet been decided when the slapping will begin.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Plastic waste recycled: 5% last year</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/23/us-plastic-waste-recycled-2021-greenpeace">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/23/us-plastic-waste-recycled-2021-greenpeace</a>
GIST	<p>Only 5% of the mountains of plastic waste generated by US households last year was recycled, according to new research by Greenpeace.</p> <p>Americans discarded 51m tons of wrappers, bottles and bags in 2021 – about 309lb of plastic per person – of which almost 95% ended up in landfills, oceans or scattered in the atmosphere in tiny toxic particles.</p> <p>The plastics problem is not just down to wanton consumerism or laziness – in fact the situation would still be bad even if every household separated every piece of plastic and disposed of it in a dedicated recycling plant, according to Greenpeace.</p> <p>Not a single type of plastic packaging in the US meets the definition of recyclable used by either the Federal Trade Commission or the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s new plastic economy initiative, the report found.</p> <p>Even plastics long considered recyclable – bottles and jugs (PET #1 and HDPE #2) –fall far short of the 30% recycling rate needed to meet the definition of recyclable by the foundation. The reprocessing rate for the rest of the plastics used by millions of people everyday to wrap leftovers, eat takeout or return unwanted online purchases is less than 5%.</p> <p>The recycling sham will anger those who have spent time diligently washing out plastic containers and bottles, in the belief that they’d end up reprocessed and repurposed into another plastic package the world probably didn’t need.</p> <p>“Corporations like Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé and Unilever have worked with industry front groups to promote plastic recycling as the solution to plastic waste for decades. But the data is clear: practically speaking, most plastic is just not recyclable. The real solution is to switch to systems of reuse and refill,” said Lisa Ramsden, Greenpeace USA senior plastics campaigner.</p> <p>The report, <a href="#">Circular Claims Fall Flat Again</a>, updates the 2020 survey of 370 recycling plants which found most plastics were not widely accepted, and even the bottles and jugs were not completely recycled or recyclable. Not much has changed, in fact the official recycling rate in the US has fallen from a high of 9.5% in 2014 and 8.7% in 2018. At that time, the US, like many countries, exported millions of tons of plastic waste to China and counted it as recycled even though much of it was burned or dumped.</p> <p>After China stopped accepting plastic waste in 2018 because it was basically garbage, too dirty to recycle, the shortfall in capacity was never recouped while plastic use kept rising.</p> <p>But exporting plastic was always a false solution, as is all plastic recycling because plastic waste is so ubiquitous that it’s extremely difficult to collect, virtually impossible to sort, environmentally harmful and expensive to reprocess, and often contains toxic materials.</p> <p>On the other hand, paper, cardboard, metal and glass do not have these problems, which is why they are recycled at much higher rates.</p> <p>After three decades, industry claims that plastic recycling is still in its infancy ring hollow, according to Ramsden. “Instead of continuing to greenwash and mislead the American public, industry should support an ambitious Global <a href="#">Plastics</a> Treaty that will finally end the age of plastic.”</p> <p>The treaty is currently being drawn up, after more than 170 nations in March backed a <a href="#">historic UN resolution to end plastic pollution</a>, with an international legally binding agreement to be in place by</p>

	<p>2024. It's hoped that the treaty will determine the trajectory of the plastic pollution crisis for generations to come, with packaging being replaced with reuse and refill systems or no packaging at all.</p> <p>If the status quo continues, global plastic use and waste will nearly triple by 2060 with a meagre increase in plastic recycling, according to a recent report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Concern: mental health risks from 'dabbing'</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/researchers-concerned-about-mental-health-risks-of-dabbing-highly-potent-cannabis-products">https://www.q13fox.com/news/researchers-concerned-about-mental-health-risks-of-dabbing-highly-potent-cannabis-products</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - A group of local researchers are concerned about dabbing, fearing that in five to 10 years from now, people who use the highly concentrated form of marijuana will see significant negative effects on physical and mental health.</p> <p>Using bud has had the green light for nearly a decade in Washington State. In those years, we have learned a lot about the health benefits of using marijuana. However, researchers like Beatriz Carlini with the University of Washington Addiction, Drug, Alcohol Institute are warning against the damage using certain marijuana products can have on one's mental health.</p> <p>"Cannabis legalization brought jobs, less criminalizing of people that have different behaviors and brought the lowest taxes to our state," Carlini said.</p> <p>Bud, joints, gummies, vapes and extracts are being sold everywhere. Carlini's recent focus has been on dabs or highly concentrated wax extracted from the plant.</p> <p>"I felt frankly betrayed on my enthusiasm for legalization," Carlini said. "They don't resemble a plant they are just gooey."</p> <p>For those who have not heard of dabs, they are a honey-like substance with 60 to 90 percent THC concentrate, which makes up 34% of our market, according to Carlini. The demand for dabs has increased dramatically since 2014 when they made up only 7% of the products in the market.</p> <p>"Why are we having products that can go as high as 90% if we don't even allow this for alcohol," Carlini said. "For these particularly very potent products, the concerns are mostly into becoming psychotic or schizophrenic for life," Carlini said.</p> <p>The researcher is aware of the relief some people suffering from anxiety, depression and or panic attacks get from the marijuana flower itself.</p> <p>30-year-old Maddy is one of them, and has smoked dabs before.</p> <p>"It's quite effective, but I know that the research isn't all there in terms of what inhaling the oil does to your lungs," Maddy said.</p> <p>As Carlini is trying to put out the torch, saying that raising the legal age to purchase dab oil to 25, after the brain is fully developed, is one option. Another is to place a higher tax on it for its potency.</p> <p>Those who dab, like Matthew Vallejo, say it is all about personal responsibility.</p> <p>"Maybe capping it isn't a good approach, because my tolerance does not speak for somebody else's, or my mental health and personal health is not the same as somebody else's," Vallejo said.</p> <p>The 29-year-old has been dabbing on and off since college and says he has not felt any adverse effects.</p>

	<p>"As they say, the poison is on the dose right," Carlini said.</p> <p>Carlini and her team will be releasing the results of their study to Washington State legislators at the end of the year, giving them their recommendations on what to do when describing the effects of these products.</p> <p>FOX 13 reached out to the Washington CannaBusiness Association regarding researchers concerns. Vicki Chstophersen, executive director of the organization sent us this statement:</p> <p>"The Washington CannaBusiness Association's top priority is a safe and quality-controlled marketplace that works to keep products away from kids. We are well-versed on the safety measures, testing and vetting that takes place specific to products and operators in the regulated market. We support transparency and consistent regulation, not prohibition, to help protect public health and safety. A few years ago, a crisis caused by vapor-related products highlighted how unregulated, illegal products, for which there is no information as to source, content, or potency, should be of concern to regulators and lawmakers alike. A return to prohibition policies is a threat to an open, transparent sector and inadvertently supports the illicit market which operates in the dark."</p>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Phoenix party shooting: 1 dead, 7 injured</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/1-dead-7-injured-after-shooting-at-a-Phoenix-17528951.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/1-dead-7-injured-after-shooting-at-a-Phoenix-17528951.php</a>
GIST	<p>PHOENIX (AP) — One person was killed and seven other people injured after a shooting at a house party in southwest Phoenix, police said Sunday.</p> <p>Police said they're still searching for the shooter and one of the seven injured victims was in critical condition.</p> <p>The others had injuries not considered life threatening.</p> <p>Police said they received a call around 9:30 p.m. Saturday about the shooting and that several of the injured people were taken from the home to hospitals by family and friends.</p> <p>When officers arrived at the scene, witnesses told them that someone they didn't know showed up at the house and was reportedly trying to cause problems.</p> <p>Then while a large group was standing in the front yard, they said that same person reportedly shot into the group of people and left the area in a car before officers arrived.</p> <p>Police said a man who was among the four people hospitalized died later Saturday night.</p> <p>His name hasn't been released yet.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Activists throw mash potatoes on a Monet</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/arts/claude-monet-mashed-potatoes-climate-activists.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/23/arts/claude-monet-mashed-potatoes-climate-activists.html</a>
GIST	<p>Two climate activists threw mashed potatoes on a glass-covered painting by the celebrated French Impressionist Claude Monet on Sunday inside a German museum, the latest art attack intended to draw attention to climate change.</p>



Videos show the activists [dousing one of the artist's works](#), “[Grainstacks](#),” with a thick yellow substance that covered the painting’s warm red hues. The oil on canvas is one of 25 paintings the artist made around 1890 of stacks of hay in the fields near his house in Giverny, France.

The activists, a man and a woman, each glued a hand to the wall by the painting. Then, [the woman shouted in German that the world was in “a climate catastrophe](#), and all you are afraid of is tomato soup or mashed potatoes in a painting,” referring to a similar attack this month in London by activists who threw cans of [tomato soup on a painting by Vincent van Gogh](#). In videos posted online, liquid can be seen dripping from the painting’s frame as one of the activists speaks.

The [Museum Barberini](#) in Potsdam, Germany, which had “Grainstacks” on exhibit, said in a statement that the activists were associated with Last Generation, an advocacy group devoted to climate change issues.

The museum said that the food did not cause any damage to the piece, which sold for nearly [\\$111 million](#) in 2019. The painting will be on display again by Wednesday, the museum added.

Last Generation [identified](#) the woman who attacked the painting as Mirjam Herrmann, 25. The group identified the other activist as Benjamin but did not provide a surname. They were taken to jail on Sunday, according to a Twitter post from Last Generation, which did not immediately respond to a call seeking comment.

In a [post](#) on Last Generation’s website promoting its stunt in Germany, the group mentioned the attack on the van Gogh painting “Sunflowers,” echoing the other activists’ central question: “What is worth more, art or life?”

The latest art attack captured the attention of many people online, with some expressing concern for the painting and others describing the form of protest as misguided. But Last Generation noted on its website that while the painting had not been damaged, storms, floods and droughts worsened by climate change were already having real-world consequences.

Across Europe, climate protesters have sought to capture headlines in recent months by engaging in similar stunts tied to beloved pieces in the art world. In Britain, activists [glued themselves to about a half-dozen masterpieces](#), including a 16th-century [copy of “The Last Supper”](#) at the Royal Academy, a major art museum in London. And in Italy, activists glued themselves to [a sculpture held in the Vatican](#) and to works in [the Uffizi Gallery, in Florence](#).

The activists appear to be targeting artworks with global resonance, hoping that notable names and paintings will garner more publicity.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Crime lab delays throw cases out of court</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/prosecutor-crime-lab-delays-could-cause-cases-to-be-thrown-out-statewide/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/prosecutor-crime-lab-delays-could-cause-cases-to-be-thrown-out-statewide/</a>
GIST	<p>At the end of September, Yakima County prosecutors dropped their case against a convicted rapist.</p> <p>It wasn’t for a lack of evidence against Bradley Kenneth Denton. Instead, a state appeals court ordered that the case be dismissed with prejudice because prosecutors didn’t aggressively push the Washington State Patrol crime lab to process DNA evidence more quickly.</p> <p>That state Court of Appeals Division III ruling doesn’t just affect Denton and his victim, Yakima County Prosecuting Attorney Joe Brusica said. It could cause additional cases to be scrapped throughout Washington.</p> <p>“People need to know there’s fallout from this decision,” Brusica said in a recent interview. “It’s not just Yakima County. It’s all 39 counties. It’s a statewide issue.”</p>



### **Series of delays**

The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to a speedy trial. In the state's court system that means a defendant must be brought to trial within 60 days of arraignment if they are in custody, or 90 days if they are not in jail.

That countdown can be reset if time is needed to ensure both sides are ready to go to trial.

Denton, 43, was charged with second-degree rape, felony protection order violation and four gross misdemeanor counts of violating a protection order after Yakima police said he choked and raped a woman he knew in April 2018, according to court documents.

He was arrested in October 2018 and arraigned in early November, with his trial set to begin at the end of December. A Yakima County Superior Court judge extended that date in part because prosecutors were waiting for the state crime lab to process the woman's clothes for DNA evidence.

On Jan. 3, 2019, the trial clock was reset again when Denton's court-appointed attorney had to withdraw for health reasons. At a Jan. 29 hearing, prosecutors said they were looking at a "best-case scenario" of nine months for the DNA tests to be completed. The trial date was reset to June 17, 2019, over Denton's objections.

A month before that trial date, prosecutors asked for another extension on the trial date, again citing the crime lab delay. This time a delay was granted until July, after Deputy Yakima County Prosecuting Attorney Garrison Hersey said he asked if the crime lab could "make it a rush," with results expected in no more than six weeks.

Not knowing what defense Denton was going to offer, Hersey said having the DNA evidence was critical to the case. Hersey also referred to the speedy trial guidelines as "aspirational."

Two more delays were granted, one to allow the defense time to prepare after the DNA evidence came back, and again when every judge except Judge Richard Bartheld recused themselves from hearing the case.

Denton was finally tried in January 2020, more than a year after his initial arraignment. At the trial, he was found guilty on all counts.

Denton appealed his case on multiple grounds, but appellate court found the 15-month delay warranted a reversal of Denton's conviction and an order to dismiss the charge with prejudice, meaning he can never be retried.

"We deplore this outcome given the violent nature of Mr. Denton's crimes, but it is the strict remedy that drafters of the [criminal court] rule perceived as needed to ensure that criminal cases will be promptly prepared for trial and heard," Chief Judge Laurel Siddoway wrote in the decision.

Brusic decided in late September to not pursue an appeal to the state Supreme Court and dropped the case against Denton, which means the ruling is binding only on Eastern Washington.

### **A dilemma for prosecutors**

The Denton ruling puts prosecutors on what Brusic described as the horns of a dilemma: Either wait to file a charge until you have all the evidence in hand or proceed with what you have and hope the crime lab results come back in time for trial.

Prosecutors could also file a charge and, if it looks like there will be a delay, dismiss the case without prejudice — thus allowing prosecutors to refile it when additional evidence arrives.

“If we don’t have evidence, we can’t charge it out. If someone has a drinking problem and they are out [of custody], they could kill a family,” Brusic said. The issue of delays also extends to the state hospitals where defendants are evaluated to determine if they are mentally competent to stand trial, Brusic said.

Paul Kelley, Yakima County’s chief public defender, said the delays are a problem for defendants who have a constitutional right to a speedy trial, as well as society in general.

“If courts are excusing the behavior of the state, it impacts the public’s interest in resolving cases in a timely manner, and the public’s confidence in the ultimate outcome of the case,” Kelley said.

One of the issues the court cited in its ruling was that the county did not seem to be aggressively trying to work around the delay, either by contacting the lab to expedite the testing sooner or by going with an outside lab.

Brusic said prosecutors will have to do a better job of stating why they are seeking a delayed trial, explaining why they are seeking it and what steps are being taken to address it.

Another way to get around the issue is to send the kits to a private certified laboratory to get the results back quicker. But Brusic said that taxes his office’s budget, which means that option could only be used judiciously.

### **Serious situation**

State Patrol spokesman Chris Loftis said the agency recognizes how serious the situation is, and while progress is being made, the demand for testing is increasing.

Denton’s case came at the height of the lab’s rape kit backlogs, Loftis said, when thousands of rape kits remained untested. The lab prioritized testing if detectives or prosecutors said the results were urgently needed.

“In fact, once the prosecutor called [about the kit in the Denton case] and we were aware of the prosecutorial need, we were able to prioritize the case and we got the report released six weeks after it was assigned,” Loftis said.

He said with the launch of the High Throughput Lab and sending test kits to outside labs, the crime lab has been meeting the state requirement to process new rape kits within 45 days, while working on reducing the backlog of cases. It’s expected that the backlog will be eliminated by the end of next year, Loftis said.

“Still, more needs to be done,” Loftis said. “Our state continues to grow, and criminal behavior is on the ascent.” And that means the State Patrol needs more funding from the Legislature to both keep the current labs operating and to expand its staffing and capacity to keep up, he said.

### **Looking for solutions**

State Rep. Gina Mosbrucker, a Republican from Goldendale, Klickitat County, said lawmakers will look into staffing at the state crime lab. She suggested the state could offer hiring bonuses or student loan forgiveness to attract forensic scientists.

While Yakima County is working on a regional crime intelligence center, which will have the capacity to perform rapid DNA tests, it won’t affect the rape kit situation. Those tests will not be done at the regional center, Yakima County sheriff’s spokesperson Casey Schilperoort said.

Any results from the regional lab will have to double-checked by the state lab or a private, certified laboratory, Schilperoort said.

Brusic and Kelley say the solution is more state funding and resources to eliminate logjams at the state crime lab.

	"It is a system issue. Delays like that are contrary to the public interest in prompt resolution of cases," Kelley said.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/23 Chicago street drag-racing shooting: 3 dead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/injured-fatalities-chicago-drag-race-caravan-shooting/story?id=91960201">https://abcnews.go.com/US/injured-fatalities-chicago-drag-race-caravan-shooting/story?id=91960201</a>
GIST	<p>At least five men were shot, three fatally, early Sunday when <a href="#">gunfire erupted</a> at a Chicago intersection taken over by a drag-racing caravan of more than 100 cars, police said.</p> <p>The shooting erupted about 4 a.m. at an intersection in the Brighton Park neighborhood on the city's Southwest side, Cmdr. Don Jerome of the Chicago Police Department said at a news conference.</p> <p>The gun violence in the nation's third largest city erupted despite a 20% drop in shootings in Chicago through the end of summer, according to Chicago <a href="#">police crime statistics</a>. Homicides have also plummeted 16% from last year.</p> <p>Jerome said police officers were responding to complaints of a drag-racing caravan in the area with cars peeling rubber and doing doughnuts in the middle of an intersection.</p> <p>"There was drifting in the middle of the street and approximately 100 cars had gained control of the intersection," Jerome said.</p> <p>He said officers at one of the police departments Strategic Decision Support Centers were monitoring the incident via a live video feed when they received a ShotSpotter gunshot detection alert of at least 13 shots at the intersection and "people hitting the ground."</p> <p>Upon arriving at the scene, officers learned that five people had been shot and were all taken to hospitals in private vehicles.</p> <p>Jerome said four men with gunshot wounds were taken to Holy Cross Hospital and one was taken to Mount Sinai Hospital.</p> <p>He said three men were pronounced dead upon arriving at a hospital, and two other men were in serious condition, but expected to survive.</p> <p>Two 20-year-old men were among those who died, police said. Authorities did not release the age for the third man fatally shot. Their names were not immediately released.</p> <p>The two men who were wounded were described as a 19-year-old and a 21-year-old.</p> <p>Investigators recovered multiple shell casings from the crime scene, suggesting that more than one gunman was involved, Jerome said.</p> <p>No arrests were immediately announced. Jerome said police are investigating if some of the people who were wounded or killed were armed and fired shots during the incident.</p> <p>"All three of the decedents did have a gang affiliation," Jerome said.</p> <p>He said police are searching for "one or two" people police suspect were involved in the shooting, adding, they "are not necessarily those in the hospital."</p> <p>Chicago Alderman Raymond Lopez, who represents the area where the shooting occurred, called for a police crackdown on the roving drag-racing caravans.</p> <p>"This is not just fun and games on the street," Lopez said at Sunday's news conference with Jerome. "We are seeing gangs and criminality join into the drifting and drag-racing."</p>

HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Gunman opens fire Dallas hospital; 2 dead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/dead-gunman-opens-fire-dallas-hospital-officials/story?id=91917260">https://abcnews.go.com/US/dead-gunman-opens-fire-dallas-hospital-officials/story?id=91917260</a>
GIST	<p>Two hospital employees were fatally shot at a Dallas medical center on Saturday, hospital officials said.</p> <p>A suspect in the deadly shooting was taken into custody after a responding officer shot and injured him, officials said.</p> <p>Police with the Methodist Health System and Dallas Police Department responded to reports of an active shooter at Methodist Dallas Medical Center around 11 a.m. Saturday.</p> <p>A Methodist Health System police officer "confronted the suspect, and fired his weapon at the suspect, injuring him," the hospital said in a statement. "The suspect was detained, stabilized, and taken to another local hospital."</p> <p>The suspect has not been identified. No further information was available on the victims.</p> <p>"The Methodist Health System Family is heartbroken at the loss of two of our beloved team members," Methodist Health System said in a statement. "Our entire organization is grieving this unimaginable tragedy."</p> <p>"During this devastating time, we want to ensure our patients and employees that Methodist Dallas Medical Center is safe, and there is no ongoing threat," the statement continued. "Our prayers are with our lost co-workers and their families, as well as our entire Methodist family. We appreciate the community's support during this difficult time."</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing. Dallas police are assisting Methodist Health System police, the hospital said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/22 Shooting near Louisiana university; 11 hurt</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/authorities-11-not-9-shot-near-louisiana-university/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/authorities-11-not-9-shot-near-louisiana-university/</a>
GIST	<p>BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — A Louisiana shooting injured 11 people at a fraternity house near Southern University's campus, which is in the midst of celebrating its homecoming festivities, and two people are in custody, Baton Rouge police said.</p> <p>Authorities initially said nine people were injured early Friday at the party held just off campus. At a news conference late Friday, Deputy Chief Myron Daniels confirmed that two others were wounded, The Advocate reported. Police said the 11 victims have injuries that are not life-threatening.</p> <p>The two men arrested were identified as Daryl Stansberry, 28, and Miles Moss, 24, and each faces 11 counts of being accessories after attempted first-degree murder and illegal use of weapons, news outlets reported. It was unknown if either were represented by an attorney who could speak on their behalf. They're being held in the East Baton Rouge Parish jail.</p> <p>A motive for the shooting was not released, but Daniels said investigators believe it was "an isolated incident." A police spokesman said it appeared to have resulted from something that happened at an annual party, hosted by Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, and not as a result of an ongoing feud.</p> <p>It's not the first time the "Kappa Luau" ended in gunfire. In 2018, LSU basketball player Wayde Sims was shot dead during an altercation at the off-campus party.</p> <p>Southern University released a statement hours after Friday's shooting, emphasizing that the party was not a school-sponsored event and that the shooting did not happen on the university's grounds.</p>

	Southern University police said officers would beef up security at remaining homecoming events that included Saturday's homecoming football game against Virginia-Lynchburg. The game kicks off at 4 p.m.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Whatcom Co. arrests for trafficking fentanyl</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/3-arrested-for-trafficking-over-75k-fentanyl-pills-into-whatcom-county">https://www.q13fox.com/news/3-arrested-for-trafficking-over-75k-fentanyl-pills-into-whatcom-county</a>
GIST	<p>BELLINGHAM, Wash. - Two people were arrested in Bellingham and another in North Carolina in connection to trafficking more than 75,000 fentanyl pills into Whatcom County.</p> <p>According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, Homeland Security agents learned of a trafficking network that brought in fentanyl pills to western Washington from Mexico.</p> <p>In August 2022, agents, acting in an undercover capacity, Homeland Security purchased an initial batch of 2,000 fentanyl pills from the suspects.</p> <p>In September, the agents put in a request for 75,000 pills for \$112,000. The deal was set for Sept. 28 near the Bellingham airport. While one co-conspirator was delivering the drugs to one location, two other men met with undercover agents at a coffee shop where the undercover agents briefly showed the two men what appeared to be \$112,000 in cash.</p> <p>22-year-old Guillermo Vieyra Salas, 41-year-old Jamie Alonso Hernandez and Manuel Lugo were arrested and charged with conspiracy to distribute controlled substances.</p> <p>Due to the quantity of drugs involved, the suspects face a mandatory minimum 10-year prison sentence, and a maximum of life in prison.</p> <p>"There have been far too many deaths in Whatcom County attributable to fentanyl overdoses," said Whatcom County Sheriff Bill Elfo. "We were pleased to join forces with our federal partners to disrupt the criminal enterprises that are bringing this deadly menace into our community."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Crime spree led to killing of business owner</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/suspect-accused-of-killing-seattle-business-owner-to-appear-in-court-friday#">https://komonews.com/news/local/suspect-accused-of-killing-seattle-business-owner-to-appear-in-court-friday#</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash. — A man accused of going on a violent crime spree in south Seattle and the Central District will remain behind bars without bail.</p> <p>Ashton Christopher Leffall, 31, is <a href="#">accused of shooting and killing D'Vonne Pickett, Jr.</a>, outside his store in the Central District earlier this week. Leffall is also facing multiple charges for other crimes, according to King County prosecutors.</p> <p>Pickett's family confronted Leffall for the first time in court on Friday afternoon, lamenting the loss of their son.</p> <p>"He stole my baby, he took him," Pickett's mother, Nicky Chappell, said outside court Friday after confronting her son's alleged killer.</p> <p>Leffall faced forward during his initial court appearance as Pickett's family screamed behind him. The victim's family said Leffall was friends with Pickett in high school and had been harassing the family for years.</p> <p>"He stalked our store, he stalked my brother, he even came into the store," the victim's sister, DazWonique Morris, said.</p>

“He thought and planned, he thought all this out, to intentionally come kill my brother,” De’Auz’Janae Pickett added.

Leffall went on a crime spree spanning three days leading up to Pickett’s murder, according to court documents. Leffall is accused in the [robbery and shooting of a separate business owner](#) at an African imports specialty store on the 4400 block of Rainier Ave. S on Monday.

Later that night, investigators said Leffall shot a driver in the leg on Aurora near Raye Street in Seattle. He also allegedly shot at a mother and her children in traffic near Rainier Ave. S and 68th Ave. S Tuesday before confronting Pickett outside his Central District store Wednesday night, shooting and killing Pickett in front of his wife.

Police arrested Leffall Thursday afternoon and said he was wearing some of the same clothing spotted on surveillance cameras.

Prosecutors argued in court Friday that Leffall is dangerous and should be held without bail, to which a judge agreed. The judge also found probable cause to charge Leffall with murder in the first degree, two counts of assault in the first degree, robbery, and unlawful possession of a firearm in connection with his other alleged crimes. Prosecutors have 72 hours to formally charge Leffall -- an update is expected Monday.

According to court documents, during the investigation, a relative of Leffall’s called 911 and told police Leffall “was suffering a psychotic episode and may be traveling around Seattle shooting people.”

Witnesses told officers they heard several shots around 6:30 p.m. Wednesday near the intersection of East Union and MLK Jr. Way. When officers arrived, they said they found a man, later identified as Pickett, with gunshot wounds. The shooter had already taken off. Pickett was taken to Harborview Medical Center, where he later died.

“He did not deserve this, and I just can’t believe it,” the victim’s sister, De’Auz’Janae Pickett, said, “It’s not fair.”

Family members told KOMO News Pickett was a husband, father of three young children, and said he was a community leader and business owner of The Postman in the Central District. His family believes he may have been closing up shop for the day when he was shot and killed in front of his store, which he opened a few years ago to fill a need in the community he grew up in after the local post office closed.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Arrests: slaying 2, shooting of tribal officer</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Suspects-loose-after-2-killed-tribal-officer-17525482.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Suspects-loose-after-2-killed-tribal-officer-17525482.php</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Authorities said Friday that they arrested three suspects in the slayings of two people and shooting of a police officer after a daylong search on a tribal reservation in northeastern Washington.</p> <p>The Colville Tribes Emergency Services said on Facebook Friday evening that the third suspect was arrested in Elmer City, one of several small communities on the rural reservation. Two others were arrested earlier in the day.</p> <p>The search for the suspects began after the Colville Tribal Police Department responded to a report of a shooting on Thursday in Keller, a small community about 275 miles (450 kilometers) east of Seattle. Officers found two people dead, and an officer who came across a vehicle described as having left the scene was shot in the arm, according to the department. He was doing well after being transported for medical care, the department said in a news release.</p> <p>Police identified two of the suspects as Curry Pinkham and Zachary Holt. They did not release the name of the third man who was arrested. They also did not release a possible motive for the slayings.</p>

The search spread overnight to the town of Nespelem, a close-knit community about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Keller, with 10 law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, Washington State Police and Border Patrol, assisting. Authorities urged residents to remain indoors as they looked for the men.

Robin Redstar, a Colville Tribal member and Nespelem resident, said she and other residents waited in their home for hours, and at one point one of the suspects was believed to be in a gully behind her house. Authorities eventually arrested a man in front of her home around 10 a.m. after he tried to enter her neighbor's back door, Redstar said.

Her neighbor, a hunter with guns, was able to detain the man and get him to the street, where a tribal police car was waiting, Redstar said. Two of her neighbor's friends helped get the man to the police car. She said she saw her neighbor with the suspect when she ran out to her truck.

“It was pretty quick. Corbie (the neighbor) was giving him a good speech about morals,” she said.

Authorities didn't release many details, but the Colville Tribal Police announced around noon that two of the suspects had been arrested.

By 4 p.m., the search for the final suspect had spread to Elmer City, with the Colville Tribes Emergency Services saying Pinkham had reportedly been seen in the area and warning residents not to approach him. At about 6 p.m., the agency said Pinkham had been apprehended.

Cody Desautel, executive director of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, wrote that schools in Nespelem and Keller were closed Friday because the situation had affected both districts. School was also canceled Friday in another nearby school district, covering the small towns of Wilbur and Creston.

Only about 200 people live in Keller, an unincorporated community that runs alongside the Sanpoil River. The center of town is marked by a post office, a community center and a Catholic church, and small groups of homes are sprinkled along residential streets branching off a rural highway.

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville comprise about 9,400 descendants of a dozen Native American tribes. The reservation covers nearly 2,200 square miles (nearly 5,700 square kilometers) west of Lake Roosevelt, the reservoir formed on the Columbia River behind the Grand Coulee Dam.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Phony transit worker pulls junction box wire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article267702217.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article267702217.html</a>
GIST	<p>A person wearing a hard hat and vest was spotted pulling wire from a highway ramp in Washington — but they weren't with the transportation department, officials said.</p> <p>Signal techs with the Washington State Department of Transportation saw a person pulling wire from a conduit and a junction box on the Interstate 5 ramp to the West Seattle Bridge on Monday, Oct. 17, the agency said on Twitter.</p> <p>They began recording the person because they didn't look “legit” and called authorities, the Oct. 21 tweet said.</p> <p>Washington State Patrol troopers arrested the phony transit worker, though it's unknown what the charges were.</p> <p>McClatchy News reached out to Washington State Patrol but did not immediately hear back on Friday, Oct. 21.</p> <p>The agency said it was obvious the worker wasn't real because a “legit signals operation will have warning signs, cones or barrels, a truck with markings and multiple people on site.”</p>



	The department said wire theft is common across the country.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/21 Group of teens in robberies, assaults</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article267690687.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article267690687.html</a>
GIST	<p>Lakewood police have arrested three teenagers suspected in a series of eight robberies and assaults in the Tacoma area this week that included attacks on three ride-share drivers.</p> <p>Between Monday and Wednesday, the alleged robbers attacked eight people and stole vehicles and other property in incidents reported in Tacoma, Lakewood and University Place, according to a Thursday news release from Lakewood Police Department. Police said the suspects were teenagers, and their victims ranged in age from 23 to 78. In one incident, police said a group of eight to 10 people tried to steal a car from a man at a Walmart in Lakewood, but they fled when officers showed up.</p> <p>Four of the robberies occurred at a Walmart in the 7000 block of Bridgeport Way Southwest. Police said several of the suspects returned there Thursday night, and officers doing surveillance took two boys and one girl into custody who were between the ages of 14 and 17.</p> <p>Police were looking for other suspects, and they cautioned people to be aware of their surroundings.</p> <p>The first incident occurred at about 3:45 a.m. Monday in the 7200 block of South Tacoma Way. Police said a 48-year-old Lyft driver was assaulted and his vehicle was stolen.</p> <p>Later that morning, police said the suspects went to the Lakewood Walmart twice, stealing a purse from a 66-year-old woman and a backpack from an 18-year-old man.</p> <p>Police said the suspects — described as a “large group of males” — also tried to take the man’s car keys. Police also suspect that two people involved in those robberies attacked a 78-year-old man Monday afternoon at Kobayashi Park in University Place. The man’s vehicle was stolen, but it was later found abandoned in Tacoma.</p> <p>The same two suspects are believed to have been involved in assaults on two ride-share drivers Tuesday in Tacoma. An Uber driver and a Lyft driver were attacked and had their vehicles stolen, according to the release. Police said a firearm was displayed in one incident, and the suspects hit the Lyft driver with his vehicle when they fled.</p> <p>On Wednesday, police said a group of four people assaulted a 23-year-old woman and stole her car. During the robbery, police said the victim jumped on the hood of her car to try to stop the theft, but the robbers drove off, throwing her to the pavement. Police said she was transported to an area hospital to be evaluated for her injuries.</p>
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